

COMMON COUNCIL MEETING

June 8, 2020

CHIEF'S PRESENTATION

Summary of Q & A – Below is a series of questions asked by our community, and answered by Chief Coughlin, during the following time frame; May 27, 2020 through June 8, 2020. This summary was presented to the Verona Common Council at their meeting on June 8, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

Q: Have you seen the video of the Floyd case and what did you think of it?

A: Yes, it's troubling and difficult to watch.

Q: Is holding a knee on a person's neck a legitimate tactic that VPD uses?

A: No. Using a knee on the neck in that manner would require a deadly force justification.

Q: How does this event and the fallout from it, affect your ability to police in areas where there are tensions between police and the community?

A: It makes the job of policing significantly more difficult. VPD staff works every day to earn the trust of the public and this incident can terminate that trust with some people and cause doubt in others who would have ordinarily been supportive and trusting. Trust is a delicate privilege that sometimes takes years to earn and can be destroyed in an instant.

Q: If you need to physically restrain a person, what techniques are used?

A: The techniques are many and dependent upon the specific situation and circumstances. However, these techniques are derived from the Wisconsin Department of Justice Bureau of Training and Standards. Wisconsin's system of Defense and Arrest Tactics (DAAT) is defined as a system of verbalization skills coupled with physical alternatives. This definition reflects the goal of gaining voluntary compliance. Achieving your objective by verbal persuasion is always preferable to having to use physical intervention.

Q: What are examples of situations that would merit enforcement that would require an officer to physically restrain a person?

A: There are far too many to list here. The DAAT system is backed by two important concepts that guide Wisconsin law enforcement; Incident Response and Disturbance Resolution. Incident Response is a general framework for how officers should respond to calls. The Disturbance Resolution provides a model for how officers should deal with situations in which they must intervene to resolve a disturbance. This model is where it is more likely to require an officer to physically restrain a person. This model includes Control Alternatives (to overcome passive resistance, active resistance, or their threats), Protective Alternatives (to overcome continued resistance, assaultive behavior, or their threats) or Deadly Force (to stop the threat).

Q: Do you encourage your officers to call out actions they see from their peers that they don't agree with?

A: Yes, much of which is detailed in Policy & Procedure 1.03 Code of Conduct. The following are several Rules of Conduct that require an officer to do so: Use of Force; Treatment of Persons in Custody; Requirement to Report; Integrity and Equality. Each of these rules is defined and several examples describe what is required of an officer for each respective example.

Q: Why didn't you participate in the Madison365's Facebook Live conversation that took place on May 28?

A: I am an active member of the DCCOPA which consists, in part, of several standing committees. One such committee is the United Way Law Enforcement and Leaders of Color Collaboration. The members of this committee represented the DCCOPA, including myself, by participating in the Town Hall. I had two VPD supervisors monitor the Town Hall while it was occurring.

Q: Does the VPD have a statement about the police killing of George Floyd and does your department sign on to the DCCOPA statement condemning the Minneapolis Officers?

A: The VPD's statement is the same as the DCCOPA statement. I agree with the statement made by the association and sign on to it.

Q: Does the VPD currently outfit all on-duty police officers with a body-worn camera (BWC) and require that the BWC be turned on immediately when officers respond to a police call?

A: No.

Q: A WSJ article from 2017 stated that VPD did not have BWC. Three years later, has this changed?

A: No.

Q: If not, why?

A: I submitted a budget request for BWCs in 2019 and they were not funded. I also made a verbal request for them in 2018 and the proposal was not supported. I plan to submit another request for them this summer and am hopeful they will be funded in 2021.

Q: Does the VPD conduct evidence-based police de-escalation trainings?

A: Yes.

Q: What do the trainings entail?

A: The trainings entail classroom presentations, scenarios from other police departments, discussion and Q & A.

Q: What is the racial makeup of VPD staff?

A: The VPD is comprised of 25 full-time police officers, 24 male and 1 female, and all of them are Caucasian.

Q: Why aren't the answers to these aforementioned questions provided on your website?

A: The VPD does not have staff that is dedicated to maintaining our website. Instead, I utilize clerical staff to assist with the task when activity permits. We do our best to provide a "lean"

website with useful information. However, we know that there is room for improvement and we will continue to work toward making additional improvements to the site.

Q: Please let me know how you and your department are responding to this incident and what actions are being taken to ensure that we create an equitable community that prioritizes the safety of all our residents?

A: The VPD is committed to racial justice and upholding the laws of the United States Constitution, the State of Wisconsin and the City of Verona. Additionally, we are guided by our mission, vision, values and Oath of Honor.