

An Open Letter from the Mayor to the Avondale Community

I feel compelled to write to you to express my heartfelt thoughts regarding the recent, tragic deaths of Mr. George Floyd in Minneapolis and Ms. Breonna Taylor of Louisville, as well as the many others who have lost their lives as a result of their interactions with members of law enforcement in cities across this nation. These unjustified and tragic deaths have sparked nationwide outrage and protests; they have also necessitated critical, oftentimes painful and honest discussions about the state of policing and the treatment of minority citizens in our cities.

Residents of America's cities and towns are calling for their elected officials to take a hard look at the practices and culture within each of their law enforcement agencies. As Avondale's elected officials, the City Council is duty-bound to hold our city employees accountable for their conduct, especially those whom we have entrusted to protect and serve the residents of our diverse city. We owe it to our residents to ensure that our law enforcement is adhering to the police department's policies and procedures, particularly as it pertains to use of force.

The City of Avondale prides itself in being a leader on many fronts. The Avondale Police Department maintains the highest standards of training for its officers, with policies and procedures to guide their conduct and actions. Avondale's Chief of Police has made it clear that the department has no tolerance for racism, bigotry and brutality. Over the years, the Avondale Police Department has worked tirelessly to build a culture which is based on public trust through community policing and working positively with our residents to ensure a safe community for all. In the past year, representatives from the Avondale PD have attended more than 70 community/neighborhood meetings, HOA board meetings and crime prevention meetings. Since it kicked off in 2014, Avondale PD's annual Citizens Police Academy has graduated nearly 100 residents, familiarizing them with the department's operations, policies and practices, as well as the faces of the men and women of the Avondale Police Department.

I am proud that the members of the Avondale Police Department are living up to their motto, *Serving With Honor*. The department has strived to meet the recommended guidelines for 21st Century Policing as put forth under the Obama Administration. Every police officer is required to undergo training in the Blue Courage program, focusing on a philosophy of protecting citizens and ensuring justice. The police department has sought to recruit and hire new officers from within the community or surrounding West Valley cities, and to ensure that the makeup of the organization reflects the diversity of the community. Avondale PD has also created new positions to expand and reinforce our connection with the community, including Neighborhood Resource Officers who engage with students at all levels, from elementary to high school and even at the community college level.

With regard to use of force and accountability: Over the past four years, Avondale PD has sped up the deployment of body cameras for all uniformed personnel to ensure accountability for their actions. In the next few weeks, Avondale PD will implement new technology designed to automatically activate an officer's body camera anytime a weapon is drawn or a taser is turned on. This will ensure that the actions of our officers during the most critical times are captured and recorded when interacting with a suspect.

Importantly, with the leadership of Avondale Court Judge Craig Jennings, the City has made many positive improvements in its municipal court system, that have been met with praise from all sectors of the community.

As Mayor, I am committed to working with my fellow councilmembers, Avondale's executive leadership, the Police Chief, and rank and file officers, to take the necessary steps to ensure that our police officers are upholding the constitutional rights of all individuals with whom they interact, and that their conduct is proper and ethical, with equal treatment of all individuals regardless of race, color, gender or creed.

We share in the belief that the public's trust is a foremost priority when it comes to ensuring public safety in Avondale, and that the members of our law enforcement community are continuing to build upon that public trust in their day to day interactions with the citizens of the community they serve.

In closing, I look forward to working with the City Council, City Management, the Avondale Police Department and the community to build positive relationships that will keep our City moving forward.

Sincerely,



Kenn Weise, Mayor

