



Office of the Chief
2221 South Timberline Road
PO Box 580
Fort Collins, CO 80522

970.221.6550
970.224.6088 - fax
jswoboda@fcgov.com

Statements from Chief Jeff Swoboda to the Community

June 1, 2020

I want to take a minute to thank those who gathered this weekend in Fort Collins to make their voices heard. I am proud of the way you peacefully exercised your Constitutional rights and spoke up for change in a constructive manner during this emotionally challenging time.

To those who wish to cause harm – that’s not who we are as a community. Things like “coal-rolling” public gatherings will not be tolerated; we will take enforcement action (as we did with the individual blowing exhaust at a group downtown). Trying to incite violence or destructive action towards property is also not acceptable. Thank you to the community members who refused to allow such actions to interrupt or define their peaceful gathering last night.

We’ve gotten a number of questions about removal of the memorial items left in front of the Police Services sign. Due to the volume of items left each night, the expressed intention of multiple gatherings, as well as daily inclement weather, I made the decision to remove the items after the conclusion each event as we don’t have a mechanism to store/preserve this property. This is not intended as disrespect. We know a lot of heart has gone into some of these displays, and we’ve been photographing the area each night before removal (see below). We’re exploring different options for sharing these images in a meaningful way.

We’ve also gotten follow up questions about where we stand on the issues being discussed across the country. To be clear:

We share your desire for an end to police brutality. No good cop wants bad cops in this profession.

We stand with you in creating an equitable, inclusive community where people of color feel safe.



We acknowledge that historical and present-day racism exists in our country. It needs to be addressed and stopped.

We are here to listen, to learn, to unlearn, and to have ongoing, collaborative discussions with you that inspire meaningful action and shared understanding here in Fort Collins.

A safe community requires open communication, diverse perspectives, and a foundation built on trust. Let's keep having the important conversations, even when it's difficult. Especially when it's difficult. Stay safe and call if you need us. We're always here for you.

Jeff Swoboda
Chief of Police

May 28, 2020

The death of George Floyd has been on my heart and mind these last few days, as I know it has been for many of you. In already challenging times due to the pandemic, the incident in Minnesota has left many feeling overwhelmed with questions, rightful anger, and grief. It's a heartbreaking situation by all accounts, and words can't begin to capture the depth of pain that people, especially people of color, are experiencing right now. I just want to acknowledge that first and foremost.

Every single person deserves to feel safe when encountering law enforcement. Nobody should have to fear those who have taken an oath to serve and protect them. In Fort Collins, we work for our community, and we respect the human dignity and value the life of every person we meet.

We've gotten a number of inquiries over the last few days from community members asking about Fort Collins Police's approach to use of force, bias, and police-community relations. I'm sure many others have the same questions, so I want to make sure nobody is left wondering how we operate.

HIRING

Building a professional, compassionate law enforcement agency starts with who we hire. We hire for character and teach skills. We're looking for people with a heart for service, not those craving power or authority. Our hiring process is extremely intensive and includes several levels of screening, including an integrity interview and psychological exam that dive deep to identify any red flags. In addition to the basic police academy, all of our new hires attend a 9-week in-house academy that reinforces



our agency's culture and expectations. Following this, they enter a Field Training program where they work side-by-side with experienced officers. All of these steps have been designed to ensure that we're hiring good people who genuinely want to serve and equipping them with the right skills, mindset, and resources to do so.

TRAINING

We invest heavily in training. All officers at FCPS train monthly on things like the appropriate use of tools and tactics, legal updates, and a variety of other skills, including anti-bias training, de-escalation efforts, and more. Our Personnel and Training Unit continuously evaluates our tools, tactics, and training to ensure that they remain in line with national best practices. De-escalation is one of our core philosophies. To ensure that it's a central part of our culture and operations, we integrate de-escalation into all of our training (meaning it's not just a one-time class). One-third of Fort Collins Officers are also certified in Crisis Intervention Team training (exceeding the national standard of 20%). In any situation, the safety of all involved parties is our top priority.

ACCOUNTABILITY

How do we ensure that our officers are doing the right thing once we've given them the tools for the job? We have a number of systems in place to track and review incidents involving force to make sure it's being used appropriately, early warning systems to identify and correct issues before they become a major problem, body-worn cameras to provide additional perspective into situations, and an external Citizen Review Board that reviews internal investigations and makes recommendations. I firmly believe that we need consistent expectations of integrity, equity, and accountability at every level of the organization. To that end, in 2019 we created an in-house Supervisor Academy with curriculum focusing heavily on culture, ethical decision-making, and strong leadership that actively models our values.

TRUST

The trust and partnership of our community is incredibly important. The heart of our work is not writing tickets and making arrests. From problem-solving units like the Neighborhood Engagement Team to an agency-wide focus on community interaction, we want to connect with you on a personal level.

We also recognize that there are barriers to this kind of connection. It's on us to actively seek understanding about the root causes of those barriers. This means investing in annual implicit bias training to continuously explore our own blind spots. Building programs that engage marginalized communities. Working with local Interfaith groups to hear what issues are weighing on the hearts of our residents. Owning our mistakes and learning from them. Listening to you, having these difficult discussions together, and



continuously making meaningful improvements.

When faced with a world overwhelmed by a pandemic and grief and negative headlines, I remind myself that we can make the most difference in two places: in ourselves and here in our own community. FCPS will continue to show up in both of these places. Fort Collins, we work for you and with you. We can and should collaborate to create a safe, inclusive community right here at home. Let's keep doing the work together.

Jeff Swoboda
Chief of Police