
Des Moines Police Gold Braid Organization

26 August, 2020

Councilman Joshua Mandelbaum
400 Robert D. Ray Dr.
Des Moines, IA 50309

Councilman Mandelbaum-

As a group, we find ourselves frustrated and confused as to why you personally felt the need to take the opportunity, afforded by your elected position, to publicly criticize the Police Department. Unlike you, we have chosen a more professional and direct way of communicating with you. We do not wish to cause any embarrassment to you or the members of the Council the way you have just caused embarrassment to us.

From day one, police organizations nationally and internationally have denounced the unnecessary death of George Floyd. The Des Moines Police Department has publicly stated that fact. If you will remember, as a demonstration of empathy, Police Officers and Senior Command Staff of the Des Moines Police Department went so far as to take a knee to pray with the protestors. Numerous times during these protests personnel reached out to religious, political and thought organizers as well as the leaders of the group(s) to find common ground and peace. Those attempts were met with contemptuous and deliberate attempts to undermine the very thing the organizers and agitators of the group said they were after: Peace and change. The idea that our city would even consider going forward with an organization that appears to be rudderless and implacable, is hard to believe. What has followed has been a ludicrous display of lawlessness, division, and the making of irrational demands. Everything from the destruction of property, assault and disarming of police officers; victimization of our citizens and the like has been on full display from this group from the onset, to include the unprovoked attack on a motorist during the most recent demonstration.

Mr. Zmolek, the President of the Court Avenue District reported that 90 percent of the businesses he helps to oversee sustained damage at the hands of the protestors. Damage and defacement of the art at Pappajohn is also disgusting but not surprising with this group. Notwithstanding, our police officers have been subject to violent assaults. Railroad spikes, rocks, frozen water bottles, feces and urine are just a few of the instruments used by protestors to hurt or seriously injure us while we struggled to maintain peace and protect our citizens. Our officers and our families have received death threats, been targeted at our homes and have been denied service and been told we are not welcome from local businesses. Additionally, while arresting the individuals responsible for the destruction of the squad car at Hy-Vee, police officers were assaulted and interfered with so violently that an officer was put in a chokehold, disarmed, and stripped of their police radio. Again, as expected, the group self-reported and reinforced their position as victims. The hypocrisy is staggering, and your silence has not gone unnoticed. The difference is we are accountable, and they are not. Employees and citizens of this city find themselves in an impossible situation.

From the beginning you have given time, listened and advocated for changes within the Police Department on behalf of the group(s) described above, and have done so publicly. Demand after demand has been made and put into action by your suggestion and at their behest. Ironically, you have not used your position or voice to denounce any of the destruction and violence, and most certainly have not shown support to the members of the Des Moines Police Department. If anything, your conspicuous absence and lack of leadership has been blatantly evident.

Furtherance of this point was brought to light on Thursday August 21, 2020. Local news and social media reported your obvious disdain with the arrest of Matthew Bruce. (As a caveat, detectives often will take an unobtrusive approach to monitor protests of all types to ensure the event remains peaceful and is not interfered with by anti-protestors). Matthew Bruce is known to law enforcement and is an agitator. Mr. Bruce took the opportunity to use his influence and enabled others to box in a police officer charged with the task of ensuring the safety of the participants. In doing so not only did he interfere, he put people at risk of unnecessary violence. You also spoke of the lack of de-escalation used by police in this situation. In pursuance of State of Iowa Code, police had every right to engage the suspects and effect their arrests on the spot. That most certainly would have caused an end to the protest and been seen as an infringement of individual rights. As it stands, the decision was made to affect the arrests later and elsewhere

to minimize any negative inference. The arrest being made after-the-fact was itself a de-escalation tactic. The truth is that a public offense occurred in the presence of the officer which alone meets the criteria for the arrest. De-escalation was used, the offender was arrested, and the event carried on as planned. There is no basis whatsoever to support the statement that you made that this was retaliatory. Retaliatory for what purpose? The issue is that you have taken the word of the folks responsible for the chaos and destruction of our community at face value, over having the dialogue with us to ensure both sides of the story are heard to make an informed decision. If we were truly what you believe us to be, we would have made the arrest of every single individual that assaulted our officers. To date very few were arrested for assaulting police officers throughout the duration of this activity, albeit it was our blood that was spilled.

We find your tenor and tone to be nothing if not insulting as people and as professionals. No consideration has been given by you to the men and women of this department. Precisely what do you imagine would have happened if we had not protected City hall, the Federal Courthouse, or the Polk County Courthouse? How would the protest in the Mayor's yard have gone if armed SWAT officers had not been present to ensure the safety of him, his property and his family? Your inflammatory and accusatory comments are far reaching. You are causing divisiveness not just with the officers, but the citizens and Polk County Attorney's Office as well.

We welcome an invitation on your part to meet and discuss this matter in person.

The Des Moines Police Gold Braid Organization