



NEWS RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SPRINGFIELD, OH (May 29, 2020)

Mayor, City Officials Speak Out Against Racism, Violence

Springfield Mayor Warren Copeland, Vice Mayor Joyce Chilton, City Commissioner Rob Rue, City Manager Bryan Heck and Police Division Chief Lee Graf issued statements Friday, May 29, following the death of George Floyd and the events that unfolded in Minneapolis this week. The officials addressed the community over a live stream on its social media page Friday afternoon.

“Some of us in City government felt that we needed to say a word about the things we’re trying to do to respond to the realities that have been in the news recently,” said Copeland.

Copeland said he stands with Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, who fired the officers involved with the treatment of Mr. Floyd. A video taken of the incident shows Mr. Floyd face-down and apparently restrained as a Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on Mr. Floyd’s neck. Mr. Floyd was later pronounced dead. Former officer Derek Chauvin was charged Friday of third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter in connection with Mr. Floyd’s death.

“That kind of behavior by police officers make all other police officers look bad and obviously creates deep anger in the African American community,” said Copeland. “We do not want our officers to act that way and we will discipline them if they do. This is not what the people of Springfield should expect from their police, and we don’t expect it from them as public officials.”

Springfield Vice Mayor Joyce Chilton condemned racism and voiced optimism that the Springfield community would continue to rise above the distressing events in Minneapolis that captured national attention.

“The Global Education and Peace Network, the City of Springfield Human Relations Board along with the City Commission are united in stopping racism and violence against each other and especially the African American community,” said Chilton. “Our police officers are trained to treat everyone fairly and they go through regular diversity training. Our City Manager and our Chief of Police stand united in believing that everyone in the City of Springfield should be treated fairly.”

City Commissioner Rob Rue said he could not be silent after watching the video of Mr. Floyd’s ordeal.

“I cannot be silent any longer,” said Rue. “Silence is no longer golden. The phrase, ‘All Lives Matter’ is a slap in the face to racial injustice. We witnessed not the injustice of an ‘all life,’ we have witnessed, the world has witnessed yet again, the injustice of a black life, and that matters.”

Heck issued strong words about racial injustice, adding that the people of Springfield will not tolerate oppressive or violent behavior.

“Springfield does not condone racism, the violence that we saw in Minneapolis was a blatant disregard for human life,” said Heck. “That is inexcusable and not tolerable, and we will not stand for that in our community.”

Graf said that the actions taken by Minneapolis officers in the video of Mr. Floyd are “forbidden” by the Springfield Police Division.

“I won’t tolerate actions like that in this division. It’s not what Springfield is,” said Graf. “This is a community that engages in conversation, that speaks to each other and is willing to tackle hard issues. Springfield is a peaceful community.”

To watch the livestream of Friday’s statement, go to <https://www.facebook.com/CityofSpringfieldOH>.