



June 2020

To our Grand Prairie citizens:

As we respond to inquiries concerning racial justice and police enforcement reform, I truly believe Grand Prairie embraces the shared values of justice, equality, inclusion and equity, recognizing we are a better community when everyone has a chance to reach his or her full potential, and everyone deserves to be treated with human dignity. But we can always do better, be better.

It is easy to say, we need to and will do better. Harder to do. And, this is not going to happen overnight. Real change takes time. The time to start is now.

The Grand Prairie Police Department has been working for years to operate in stark contrast to what was seen on the George Floyd video. But, residents may not know that. Many may only see the similarities in the uniforms police wear. You may have had an encounter with local police that is at odds with social justice. Recognizing that, while we believe the Grand Prairie police department has been a leader for some time on these issues and continues to model the best in community policing behavior, we all agree we can do more.

Here is what we are doing right now to fight and end racism and ensure social justice for all, most of which has been GPPD policy for years:

1. GPPD **does not use Choke Holds**, or any use of force that cuts off the airway of another person.

We have reclassified as deadly force a technique called the Vascular Neck Restraint that does not restrict airway and can only be used when an officer is confronted with a combative individual, there are no other reasonable forms of control and the officer is in fear of significant bodily injury to themselves or others. After use of the restraint hold, the subject is evaluated by medical personnel.

2. All officers are required to **undergo de-escalation training**.

This includes a 40-hour training block specifically on de-escalation plus multiple hours of de-escalation training woven into other training including crisis intervention and use of force. GPPD has a mental health coordinator on staff to provide cutting edge de-escalation training strategies, who also works with our citizens to ensure those in mental health crisis receive support to avoid further crisis and potential force encounters.

3. GPPD requires officers **give warning** before shooting, when possible.

GPPD officers train in academy and bi-annually to provide a warning anytime deadly force has to be used. Additionally, training routinely covers the sanctity of human life, and policing with empathy. GPPD officers are taught to enforce the law with love, empathy, and respect as they are part of the community they serve.

4. Officers are required to **exhaust all alternatives** before shooting.

GPPD officers are required to use only the minimum amount of force necessary to stop a threat when possible. If a subject is using deadly force against an officer or an innocent third person, exhausting all force options first would only place the officer or innocent citizen at further risk (e.g. If being shot at, it is not feasible to first exhaust commands, spray, baton, Taser, before firearm). That is why officers must properly evaluate the threat and use only the minimum amount of force necessary to stop the threat.

5. All officers are **required to intervene**.

Any officer who does not intervene while a person's civil liberties are being violated would be subject to discipline including termination and criminal charges. Our Code of Conduct requires officers to support and protect the civil liberties of all persons. They train to replace officers who have been engaged in an emotionally charged encounter with a back-up officer.

6. GPPD **banned shooting at vehicles** some time ago.

This has been banned by the GPPD for some time and can only be done if the vehicle is being used as a weapon against the officer or an innocent third person.

7. GPPD follows a **use of force continuum**.

GPPD officers are required to use only the minimum amount of force necessary to stop a threat and have a continuum of reasonableness, based on many options, to minimize physical harm to those they serve.

8. **GPPD has transparent and comprehensive reporting** system in place.

GPPD has had a comprehensive and transparent reporting system in place for quite some time.

GPPD believes changing policy only addresses part of the issue. Law enforcement agencies must ensure they have the right people wearing a badge. The GPPD has a rigorous hiring and background process aimed to weed out anyone who does not meet our moral code. They accomplish this by detailed background checks, polygraph exams, psychological exams, review panels, and every applicant is personally reviewed by the Chief of Police and each Assistant Chief. Applicants must have a college degree, military experience, or been employed at the GPPD prior to becoming an officer so that we can ensure our applicants have experienced diversity and embrace our values.

We believe it is the responsibility of the GPPD to lead by example. Policy cannot change a person's heart...but love can. We set this example in a number of ways. The Grand Prairie Police Department seeks to be one with our community. In fact, the Dallas Cowboys asked the Grand Prairie Police Department to talk about what community policing looks like, and created a documentary concerning this very topic. The recently released intro can be viewed here: <https://twitter.com/dallascowboys/status/1268953496352677889?s=21>

Chief Scesney says there is a difference between a Spirit of the Law organization versus a Letter of the Law organization. We are and want to be a Spirit of the Law organization that focuses on collaborating with community to solve problems and increase overall quality of life. We strive to uphold the law using dignity and respect during every interaction every day. Are we able to achieve this 100% of the time? No, but we will keep working on it every day. If cops know the community and the community knows cops, relationships form that make a difference all around.

Here are a few of the ways GPPD connects with our community on a regular basis:

1. Grand Prairie Police and **Clergy Coalition**. This group is a coalition of Grand Prairie Police Officers and nearly 100 Grand Prairie religious leaders. They routinely discuss issues of the day, ways to give back collectively, and lead the city on faith/community/police relationships.
2. **Citizens Police Academy (CPA)**. This program gives citizens a detailed look at the inner-workings of the GPPD. Participants learn from every unit and participate in police ride-outs, pursuit driving, and firearms training. Please consider joining!
3. **Citizens on Patrol**. This program allows those who graduate from the CPA to check out a car and patrol their own neighborhoods. Think of it like a specialized Neighborhood Watch but better. They have been a critical component to our significant crime reduction.
4. Grand Prairie Police **Youth Boxing**. This is a daily program that offers positive mentoring to disadvantaged youth through boxing. Not only does it help with life challenges but helps disadvantaged youth keep their grades up!
5. **Adopt-A-Street**. This is a program in which police officers pick up garbage in our Dalworth Community. Property values have risen in this neighborhood and it has become one of the safer neighborhoods in town.
6. **Cops-N-Kids Fishing**. Many kids have never caught a fish. They thought it was a great way to build a positive life memory with a police officer.
7. **UNIDOS**. This program is now a nationwide program created by now retired Chief Steve Dye. It is a Spanish-speaking outlet to ensure non-English speaking residents have access to information and resources.
8. **Midnight Basketball**. This program sponsors late night basketball for our youth to give them a positive outlet after-hours with police officers.
9. **Coffee with a Cop**. This program offers a framework for residents to ask whatever questions they want to police officers. No agenda or scripts. Just real talk and relationship building.
10. **National Night Out**. This is an annual event in October where the citizens of Grand Prairie get together with police and elected officials for a night of fun. There are events all over the city and it enables us to get to know one another.
11. **Two-Way Street**. This program provides positive examples to kids on how to interact with police, but equally important, how police should interact with them. They are provided video examples for review with an aim toward safety for all.
12. **Bigs in Blue with Big Brother Big Sisters**. This program pairs Grand Prairie Police employees with kids in need in our community to offer positive role models.

13. **Cops, Cuts, and Curls.** Officers visit area barbershops for open dialog. There are no scripts or agendas. Just meaningful discussions.
14. **HELP mentoring program** (Helping Explore Life Potential). This mentoring program partners police officers with juveniles who have been referred by Municipal Court and Justice of the Peace Judges. The goal is to get the kids back on the right track.

We know we are not perfect, and vow to keep working every day, not only in Police, but throughout our city government organization, to treat each other with human dignity and justice. To demonstrate this commitment, the Grand Prairie City Council passed a Community Diversity, Inclusion, Justice and Equality Resolution June 16, 2020, which can be found on the city website, here:

<https://www.gptx.org/Home/ShowDocument?id=19908>

Respectfully,



Ron Jensen
Mayor



Tom Hart
City Manager



Daniel Scesney
Police Chief