



PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT INFORMATION:

Julia Scott Valdez

Assistant City Administrator

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Phone: 1815-967-6779

E-mail: julia.valdez@ci.rockfordil.gov

MAYOR MORRISSEY RESPONDS TO FORMER OFFICERS

ROCKFORD – Mayor Morrissey responded today to the media release by retired City of Rockford Police Department officials, re-emphasizing that the new strategies implemented by the Rockford Police Department are working to reduce the longstanding crime problems in Rockford.

STATEMENT OF MAYOR MORRISSEY

I would like to take this opportunity to thank County Sheriff Deputies Dominic Iasparro, Timothy Ferguson, Theodore Getty, and Steve Pirages, for their many years of service to the City of Rockford. I respect the dedication with which they served the city during their tenure and I am appreciative of the talent and energy they brought to the department. At the time of their retirement from the city, both our Aldermen and myself had charged the newly appointed Police Chief with the responsibility of bringing a new strategy to our dated methods of law enforcement. It should be noted that the charge for change came from the voice of the citizens and was echoed by the Fire and Police Commission. The citizens clearly called for the elimination of the street level drug traffic that brought chaos and crime

to their neighborhoods. These four officers, of their own accord, chose to move to a public safety agency that more closely reflects their philosophies of law enforcement.

Our Police Chief, with the support of the elected officials and the citizens of Rockford, chose to move forward with a community-focused strategy that looked to eliminate day-to-day drug activity on our streets. Elimination of this type of daily activity had too long been ignored in favor of the long-term investigations that brought greater acclaim to federal agencies than it brought to improving the quality of life for our citizens.

In conjunction with the Police Department's new strategy, each and every department within the city moved towards a philosophy of greater accountability and building cross-functional programs across operations. Our Police Department was one of the first departments to embrace this philosophy. The approaches embraced in Community Policing complimented the broader organizational changes and brought the inclusion of staff members from the City Legal Department, the Community Development Department, and the Building Department into the management of a record high crime rate.

The Department's new philosophy of partnership, bridge building, and accountability acted as a natural prompt for the City to embrace new approaches such as the Alternative Drug Program and the M3 Street Team. The results of these new approaches were quickly visible: our crime rate was reduced, our citizens reported feeling safer on our streets for the first time in years, and the daily drug activity which had so long brought chaos to our streets, declined. Rockford became known for its innovation in fighting crime as cities such as Chicago Heights, the City of Chicago, and the US State's Attorney' Office in Chicago turned their attention to our

methodology and studied our approaches as possible solutions to their own high crime rates.

We are winning the war on crime: pure and simple. We are winning not because we have disregard for our officers, but because we hold our officers in the highest regard possible. For our retirees to stand at this point in time and begin to put blame on the reasons for a separation that happened months in the past does nothing to encourage our officers in their continued pursuit of excellence. It serves only as a means to add rhetoric to a political battle that does not belong in the arena of public safety.

I will continue to invite our union management team to the negotiation table to work through their concerns. Our Aldermen have built such an opportunity for the union. I would hope that it is understood that the public mudslinging must be put aside so that a healthy debate can ensue in the proper forum and we can continue to provide for our citizens a Police Department that embraces the needs of our community.

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