



Message to the Worthington community from Police Chief Robert Ware and City Manager Matt Greeson:

June 2, 2020

We were shocked and saddened to watch the devastating events on the video of George Floyd being killed, which has since sparked protests close to home and around the world. Racial injustice, inequality and bias remain present and all too real for many. We have internally discussed these issues for months and years, however we think the time is right to publicly share our thoughts. We are deeply troubled by the fact that people of different races and backgrounds are treated differently in our society. The color of a person's skin should not dictate how an individual is treated nor increase the likelihood of physical conflict, injury or death. In our ideal world, all people are treated equally; people in positions of authority, including police officers, do the right thing; and all people in our community trust them to do so. We obviously have a lot of work to do as a country, a city and a community to achieve this equal treatment and trust.

We believe this needs to be a community conversation about how Worthington can be supportive and welcoming to people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. Members of the community and the city government need to work every day through each individual interaction to be respectful, supportive and caring of others, regardless of background. We are committed to having conversations and taking specific steps to proactively address issues of racism and discrimination. Ultimately, we all need to show respect and caring for all people around us.

The city government, including the police division, strives every day to achieve the ideal we described. We are not perfect, however, and any time we do not live up to the ideal we expect of ourselves we risk losing the same respect that we're encouraging in the community. We must be vigilant to continually improve and grow in this area. We have taken a number of specific steps in our police division to do so. In looking back just over the past two years, we have trained on diversity awareness, ethics, social and emotional intelligence, crisis intervention, bias awareness, use of force, and de-escalation techniques.

We expect our officers and all city employees to act professionally and treat people with respect and dignity. Our officers work hard to build positive experiences and relationships in our community and they often go well beyond what we expect of them. When we don't meet our expectations, we will hold ourselves accountable for our actions. We commit to fully investigating any incidents that give us pause so we can take appropriate action.

Our society and our community have work to do and we want to help lead discussions to encourage a stronger, more respectful and more welcoming community for people of all backgrounds. We will be reaching out in the days to come to partners in our community as we take on this extremely important effort.