PUBLIC STATEMENT OF NEW HANOVER TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
CONCERNING INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

As has been previously reported, on July 26, 2019, Sandy and Keith Youse submitted a formal written complaint to New Hanover Chief of Police Kevin McKeon concerning an incident that allegedly occurred on Friday, July 19, 2019. On that date, Keith Youse, a former police officer with the New Hanover Township Police Department and another former officer, Dennis Psota, visited the Township building to pick up their Retired Police Identification cards and retrieve their personal belongings. The Youse’s complaint alleged that Mr. Psota found an egg roll on top of one of the boxes of personal belongings. The Youse’s further alleged in their complaint that they were personally outraged and offended by this because they purported to believe that someone had intended this to be a reference to Ms. Youse’s Asian heritage.

Chief McKeon immediately reported the complaint to Township administration, on the same day he received it. The Township’s Board of Supervisors decided to commence a thorough investigation conducted by an independent, outside investigator. In early August, the Township solicited proposals from several law firms for this specific purpose. Ultimately, the Board of Supervisors retained John P. Gonzales, Esquire, of the Philadelphia law firm of Marshall Dennehey, to conduct the internal investigation into the allegations set forth in the Youse’s complaint. Mr. Gonzales is an experienced and well-regarded civil rights attorney; whose practice focuses on employment-related claims of discrimination.

Separately, in September of 2019, two news articles surfaced that included claims of discriminatory and racially insensitive comments allegedly made by certain members of the New Hanover Township Police Department, as well as the original allegations involving the egg roll incident. The first article appeared on the website PhillyVoice.com on September 12, 2019, and the second appeared in the Pottstown Mercury on September 30, 2019. Considering the serious nature of the allegations contained in the articles, the Board of Supervisors authorized Mr. Gonzales to broaden the initial scope of his investigation to include these additional allegations. In addition, the NAACP became involved, and the Township met with NAACP representatives to receive any and all information they had obtained or desired to present. That information was, in turn, provided to and considered by Mr. Gonzales.

In order to facilitate as thorough of an investigation as possible, the Township provided Mr. Gonzales with extensive documents, including Township policies and procedures, CCTV footage of various locations within the Township Building, as well as unfettered access to
Township employees and any additional documents or records he deemed to be relevant. In short, he was provided free reign to conduct an investigation to the fullest extent needed for him to determine whether or not there was any validity to the allegations set forth by the Youses in their complaint as well as the allegations set forth in the media articles in September of 2019.

Over the course of the next several months, with the above-described latitude, Mr. Gonzales conducted as fair and thorough investigation as he could, through numerous formal interviews of Township employees and former employees, as well as a review of relevant documentary materials. Unfortunately, one key witness refused to be interviewed, despite repeated attempts to schedule an interview. Mr. Gonzales conducted 30 interviews of 25 Township employees during the course of his investigation. Mr. Gonzales recently concluded his investigation and reported the results to the Township’s Board of Supervisors.

**Results of Investigation:**

1. **Eggroll Incident**

   Ultimately, it was not able to be determined who placed an eggroll into the Mr. Youse’s box of personal belongings. There were several different possible explanations as to where the egg roll came from: simply being part of the materials, papers and personal belongings that were collected from Mr. Youse’s desk and locker and placed into the box; inadvertently thrown into the box over the period of months before Officer Youse came to retrieve it from the Police Department; intentionally placed in the box by someone; or even placed in the box by the person who is not an employee of the Township and was the first to discover it and who also declined to be interviewed. There simply was insufficient evidence to conclude that it was placed there intentionally by a Township employee with an intent to harass or intimidate Mr. Youse or his family.

2. **General Allegations of Racial Language and Behavior**

   Mr. Youse alleged that supervisors within the Police Department had previously used racially derogatory language when referring to his family. He admitted that, even though he was a member of union leadership, he never reported any of this alleged behavior to anyone, including the Board of Supervisors or Township Administration, nor did he submit an internal complaint of any kind under the Township’s zero-tolerance anti-harassment policies. Moreover, no witness could corroborate Mr. Youse’s allegations in this regard, and some of his allegations were specifically contradicted by certain witnesses.

   There was no suggestion that any member of the New Hanover Police Department, including any supervisor, had ever acted in a racially discriminatory manner in the performance of their duties as sworn law enforcement officers or in their dealings with any person, including any resident, Township employee or member of the general public.

   Although the allegations of widespread use of racially insensitive language was not confirmed, there were some reports of Township employees making sporadic inappropriate racial comments in years past, which are being addressed with the individual employees.
Conclusion:

While the media reports of widespread egregious and racially inappropriate language being used by supervisors within the Police Department was not confirmed, the Board of Supervisors has zero tolerance for the use of any racially inappropriate language of any kind by any Township employee and will take strong and immediate steps to ensure that such conduct will not occur in the future. The Board of Supervisors and Township management fully recognize that such improper language cannot be tolerated in a modern, professional organization of any kind, particularly within a police department. There should be no doubt that the Board of Supervisors has taken, and continues to take, these allegations seriously. To date, the Township has spent over $30,000 for Attorney Gonzales to complete a thorough investigation, one which ultimately consisted of 30 interviews (or follow-up interviews) with 25 individuals for more than 135 hours of total investigative work.

The Board of Supervisors is determined to take all measures within its power to maintain an environment that is free from discrimination of any kind. The Township has directed a review of its existing policies and procedures which prohibit discrimination and harassment to ensure that they are up to date. In addition, the Township will be implementing additional and regular sensitivity and diversity training so that all employees are reminded of what is expected of them in this regard, as well as the consequences for failing to meet those expectations. The Township will also provide targeted training for all supervisory employees to ensure that they are clear on the consequences for failing to ensure compliance with the Township’s policies. Although no allegations were made concerning any inappropriate interactions with members of the public by the Police Department, the Board is directing a full review of Police Department policies and procedures, including those involving the use of force. The Board of Supervisors remains dedicated to operating the most professional and well-trained police department in Montgomery County, and it will take all appropriate and reasonable steps to ensure that anyone residing in, or passing through, New Hanover Township is treated with utmost respect and dignity.