



Berkley Public Safety Video Update Part 1

Hey, Berkley community. It's Torri here, your Community Engagement Officer for the City of Berkley. In light of recent events that have happened around the nation and within our surrounding communities, we understand that solidarity is more important than ever. With that, I thought that it would be a great opportunity for us to chat with our Public Safety Director and discuss some of the topics regarding George Floyd, how our Public Safety fits within this, and what we're doing here at the City to ensure that we stay strong. Chief, I want to kick it off with first talking about how we are a Public Safety Department. We are not just Police or Fire. Can you explain the difference between those two?

I sure can Torri. I'm actually kind of surprised because this is our job, this is what we do. Berkley does not have a separate police and fire department, we are one. A lot of cities have a police department that falls under a police chief, a fire department that falls under a fire chief, and usually ems is under the fire department. Here in Berkley, we are one department. All of our 30 public safety officers are cross-trained; their police officers, their firefighters, and their medical first responders so no matter what happens in our community public safety officers respond. This is kind of a big job, for basic training the academy for a police officer is 16 weeks, basic training the fire academy is 12 weeks, a medical first responder is two weeks, and we have a quite a few of our officers that are still licensed paramedics or emergency medical technicians, but we operate as medical first responders. It's a big job and it's a lot of work to get this job and then once you get it, there's a lot of ongoing training that we have to stay up on for all three disciplines.

Before we get into those specifics, I think you touched on some crucial points, given the calamity of everything that's going on. You're recent to Berkley, not in maybe years but being the Chief. Can you kind of share with us how long you have served as chief for Berkley?

Sure I'm happy to come home. I actually grew up in Berkley and Huntington Woods. I graduated from Berkley High School a few years ago but I've been here in Berkley for three years in October. Prior to that, I was an Assistant Chief of the Farmington Hills Police Department. I was there for a total of 31 years. Yes, I'm old.

Well not touching on the old facts but you know more so your experience level and what you're bringing not only to our community but what you've learned and experienced given the fact that you have been in other communities. It's no surprise that Farmington



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Hills is drastically different in terms of diversity and scope and size. Can you share what those experiences were like working in other communities?

Sure, well Farmington Hills is a much more diverse city and a more diverse police department and fire department, which is what I'm used to. The Farmington Hills Police Department and the Farmington Hills Fire Department were very active in community groups. I was either on or part of a lot of community groups both religious, cultural, or race. We had relationships with the community; we had several mosques, we had several synagogues, we had all kinds of different diverse communities so we were able to make those connections. A little bit different here where the city isn't nearly as diverse as Farmington Hills and also I kind of refer to myself as the anti-police officer sometimes too because my master's degree is in Education. My master's program was with all teachers which kind of gave me another point of view. My undergrad is in Public Administration and Community Development so nothing to do with Law Enforcement and nothing to do with Public Safety. I like the fact that I've been able to gain a lot of experience both through my education and my work and training.

I think it's definitely very crucial to know and for the folks that are watching to know, because that sentiment I think is shared with all of your officers and it's definitely unique in leadership style. Could you maybe expand on how you've applied those experiences to Berkley now that you are Chief?

Sure, this department has some great personnel. Quite honestly when I first got here, I thought some of the training could have been improved. Being that I ran a training unit for several years and training is very close to my heart, so is education, so I've really encouraged our officers. There are tuition reimbursements; I've encouraged our officers to go back and get to degrees both undergrad and graduate. Also, our training budget has gone up almost 400 percent since I've been here. Again it's three disciplines that include all three but it is very important. We're not in a bubble and we need to look at the big picture so we really need to be training all the time. Another thing we also do is we do critical debrief after every single major incident. A lot of times it's on the fire-side but also on the law enforcement side where if something happens we talk about what we could have done differently or what we could have done better. I'm very open that if I make a mistake you'll know about it. Those that know me, if I make a mistake I'll say it because I want people to learn from it. I analyze myself quite a bit and I'm pretty hard on myself. What I tell people is, we are looking for perfection, knowing it's pretty much impossible, but our goal is perfection so that's what we're shooting for all the time.