

**For Immediate Release**

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## **City of Kentwood Police Chief Announces Retirement** *Deputy Chief to be Appointed to the Position*

**Kentwood, Michigan, Oct. 7, 2019** – After a distinguished law enforcement career spanning more than four decades, Kentwood Police Chief Thomas Hillen announced his retirement, effective Nov. 1.

Hillen began his 10-plus years of service to the City of Kentwood in 2009 after serving 32 years with the Kent County Sheriff's Office. During his tenure with the Kentwood Police Department, Hillen has led a team of nearly 95 personnel, including 70 sworn police officers, to serve and protect the community with excellence, focusing on reducing serious crime and increasing traffic safety.

“Chief Hillen has been an invaluable asset to our community for more than a decade,” said Kentwood Mayor Stephen Kepley. “His effective leadership and dedication to the City have been demonstrated by the department’s accomplishments. Today, Kentwood’s violent crime and property crime is at a five-year low under his leadership. For that and so much more, we are truly grateful for his service.

“While we are sad to see him go, we wish him the best as he moves into retirement and thank him for his service throughout the years.”

During his tenure in Kentwood, Hillen instituted innovative programs to address key issues in the community, such as the department’s Data-Driven Approach to Crime and Traffic Safety, or DDACTS, program, Operation PRICE to reduce retail theft, leadership development for supervisory staff and school resource officers for area middle schools. He also placed an officer on the FBI Joint Terrorist Task Force and appointed the first female captain in the department’s history.

“I have been fortunate to have had two great law enforcement careers, both at the Sheriff’s Office and here at the City,” Hillen said. “It has been a pure joy to spend these past 10 years with the Kentwood Police Department and I will greatly miss the family atmosphere.

“I’m humbled by the department’s achievements and feel grateful to have had the opportunity to work here and serve alongside the team. The officers care for the community, and the community cares for the officers. That is what makes it special to be an officer in the City of Kentwood; it’s just different here.

“Our success is attributed to our combined efforts, and I can proudly say this has been the perfect capstone experience of a profession I have loved.”

In addition to his work with the department, Hillen has served in numerous leadership roles for the profession. He has served as president of the Kent County Chiefs of Police, chairman of Kent County’s Metropolitan Drug Enforcement Team and has been on the advisory boards for the police academies at Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids Community College and Kent Career Technical Center.

He is also a member of the Law Enforcement Action Forum, also known as LEAF, assisting with the development of law enforcement model policies and related materials. Over the years, LEAF has grown to be a valuable resource for the Michigan Municipal League and other agencies in the state when addressing law enforcement public policy issues.

Hillen was KCSO's chief deputy before coming to Kentwood to serve as captain of the Patrol Division. Hillen stepped into the role of police chief from deputy chief in November 2012 following the retirement of former Police Chief Richard Mattice.

"Chief Hillen worked hard every day for the community. He constantly ensured his whole team fought around a problem and worked to innovate and get the best out of the resources available," said Kent County Sheriff Michelle LaJoye-Young, who worked with Hillen for more than 20 years. "He was a mentor for me and helped me be better at my job in the jobs I would hold in the future. I wish him the best of times in his well-earned retirement."

Mayor Kepley intends to appoint Deputy Chief Richard Roberts to fill the police chief position. City Commission will be asked to confirm the appointment.

Roberts first joined the Kentwood Police Department in 1987, initially as a police paramedic. During his more than 30 years with the City of Kentwood, including 24 years of supervisory and management experience, Roberts has served in many different roles, giving him a diverse knowledge of police operations.

In addition to his paramedic experience, he also served as a detective, field training officer, field training officer supervisor, road patrol supervisor, Staff Services Bureau supervisor and Detective Bureau supervisor. He also served on the crisis negotiating team. Roberts was promoted to captain of the Patrol Division in December 2012, where he implemented the DDACTS program, and was appointed deputy police chief in August 2017.

Roberts recently attended the prestigious FBI National Academy, an executive school for law enforcement, which has some of the best training a law enforcement executive can obtain. Participation is by invitation only, through a nomination process. Participants are drawn from every U.S. state and territory and from international partner nations.

"We have made it a priority to focus on internal leadership development, and Deputy Chief Roberts has been an integral part of our leadership team since I became police chief," Hillen said. "With his three decades of service to the City of Kentwood, there is no doubt in my mind he is dedicated to this profession, the City and our department.

"He knows our culture and has a passion for overcoming our challenges. His service to the community has been unquestionable and I have the utmost faith he will continue to provide exemplary leadership as police chief."

Hillen and his wife, Sueann, plan to spend the winter in Florida and see where life takes them next.

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