

For Immediate Release

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City of Kentwood Promotes Richard Roberts to Police Chief

Kentwood, Michigan, Nov. 14, 2019 – The City of Kentwood has promoted Richard Roberts to chief of the Kentwood Police Department.

Roberts succeeds former Police Chief Thomas Hillen, who retired after a distinguished law enforcement career spanning four decades – including more than 10 years with the City of Kentwood. In his new role, Roberts will lead a team of nearly 95 personnel, including 70 sworn police officers.

As chief, Roberts will work to reinforce the department culture, aim to recruit and hire individuals who are representative of Kentwood’s diverse community and collaborate with other departments on efforts that benefit the community at-large. He will also continue to provide the best training and equipment possible and hold the department accountable under best practices and policies through State of Michigan Accreditation.

“Throughout Chief Roberts’ more than three decades of service to the City of Kentwood, he has played an integral role in creating a positive culture and fulfilling the department’s mission,” Mayor Stephen Kepley said. “He is the best candidate to continue the tremendous service provided by our department under Thomas Hillen’s tenure.

“I have complete confidence he will continue to demonstrate outstanding leadership and dedication in his new role. I look forward to future departmental accomplishments achieved under his supervision.”

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

In addition to his paramedic experience, he also served as a detective, field training officer, field training 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 Data-Driven Approach to Crime and Traffic Safety, or DDACTS, program before being appointed deputy police chief in August 2017. He is the first in Kentwood to move through the ranks from patrol officer to police chief.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to serve our community with the great men and women of the Kentwood Police Department in this capacity,” Roberts said. “We will continue to commit ourselves to serving the community with excellence and seeking opportunities to increase our value of service.”

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.

He has also completed a number of leadership courses, including Grand Valley State University’s project management within criminal justice agencies, Michigan State University’s leadership and risk management, Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police Executive School and Grand Rapids Police Department’s Leadership Institute.

Roberts is a member of the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police, Michigan Municipal League's Law Enforcement Action Forum, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and FBI National Academy Associates.

Prior to joining the Kentwood Police Department, he served as deputy corrections officer at the Kent County Sheriff's Office and as a Roosevelt Park police officer. He received his associate degree in criminal justice from Grand Rapids Community College and is a graduate of Northwestern University Traffic Institute's police staff and command.

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