



February 28, 2019

To: Press Conference Attendees

From: Grand Rapids Police Command Officers Association

**Re: Response to the administrative leave of Captain Curt VanderKooi**

Good Afternoon and thank you for attending this press conference.

We are here today due to the unprecedented actions currently taking place by the City of Grand Rapids leadership. After weeks of investigation into the events surrounding the arrest of Mr. Ramos-Gomez, Captain VanderKooi was served with his internal affairs findings which had been reviewed by the City Manager and other appropriate city personnel prior to finalization. Captain VanderKooi was exonerated of any violation of our Impartial Policing Policy and was coached for his use of inappropriate language. The re-opening of this case and the placement of Captain VanderKooi on Administrative leave is, in our opinion, a clear violation of the Due Process Rights of one of our members under our Collective Bargaining Agreement. We are confident that any attempt to further discipline Captain VanderKooi will be overturned through all appropriate venues and open the City of Grand Rapids up to civil liability.

Furthermore, it has become perfectly clear to all members of the Grand Rapids Police Command Officers Association that over the past two years the elected officials and appointed leadership within the City of Grand Rapids will dismiss any actions by members of the Grand Rapids Police Department that are in compliance with established laws, policies, and recognized best practices in law enforcement and will instead cower to any “mob rule” behavior of any organizations that raise vocal opposition.

As an example of this reality, we were previously made aware of the collusion between our elected and appointed officials and several of the groups currently calling for the termination of

Captain VanderKooi. On May 1, 2018, during a large protest, leaders of Movimiento Cosecha GR intentionally overran a police position for the second year in a row. Warrants were sought, sworn to, and issued by a judge for the arrests of two individuals. Shortly thereafter, the Acting City Manager and the Mayor became involved and the warrants were squashed. There is no clearer example that our city leadership would rather appease these groups who intentionally violate the law to purposely disrupt businesses and residents in Grand Rapids while endangering the lives of our officers, the general public, and their own protestors. Having known about this obstruction of justice, of which the current City Manager has also been notified, we are only left to believe that support for our personnel while acting with great restraint and being overrun by law breaking individuals does not and will not exist.

On a regular basis we continually hear from city staff that our “community” does not support our policing methodology. Additionally, after the City Commission meeting on February 26, 2019, we are now hearing there are commissioners who believe “the people” have spoken and agree that Captain VanderKooi should be fired. It is hard for the Grand Rapids Police Command Officers Association to understand those beliefs when we have been utilizing a third party to conduct monthly random surveys. The results have shown that residents in all service areas overwhelmingly trust the Grand Rapids Police Department, are satisfied with the services we provide, and feel safe in our community.

In conclusion, the Grand Rapids Police Command Officers Association is confident that Captain VanderKooi, who has selflessly served the City of Grand Rapids for almost 39 years, will be vindicated. We will be standing alongside Captain VanderKooi as this process continues to ensure his rights are upheld and that any effort to further discipline him and/or to harass him into retirement are defended.

Lastly, the Grand Rapids Police Command Officers Association is hopeful that the silent majority of residents who support the daily efforts of the Grand Rapids Police Department to keep them safe will communicate their support to our elected officials and our city management.

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