

Miro Weinberger

From: Morrison109 <morrison109@aol.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 6, 2020 1:36 PM
To: Miro Weinberger
Subject: Letter
Attachments: From the desk of Jennifer Morrison.pdf

[WARNING]: External Message

Dear Mr. Mayor,

I have been holding onto this letter for a little while, waiting for the right time to send it. Specifically, I do not want this letter to be incendiary at a time when there is already significant discord in the community. It is my fervent hope that all relevant stakeholders will come together, without unattainable ultimatums, and work toward meaningful policy and operational reforms regarding public safety.

The time has come, however, for me to send this and officially step away from Burlington PD. I know that Deputy Chief Murad will do an outstanding job until a permanent chief has been hired.

All the best,
Jen

From the desk of Jennifer Morrison

September 1, 2020

Dear Mr. Mayor,

It has been an honor to serve as your Interim Chief of Police. Leading BPD and being able to steady the ship for the men and women of the agency for nearly six months was not just my honor, it was my duty. BPD is one of the finest police organizations in the country. I will always hold BPD in the highest regard as I have witnessed the depth and breadth of its compassion, creativity and efficacy. My love for and resolute belief in BPD makes what I am about to say difficult.

I will not consider returning to BPD as Interim Chief for the following reasons:

1. We agreed that if Wayne's health was stable enough, I would return after the first 100 days post-transplant (approx. Oct 1st). We are at day +70 and there is no way I can predict how his health will be in another month. As you know, we have survived a potentially deadly complication and now things seem stable. But, this journey has proved uncertain, prone to dramatic shifts, and exhausting. Even if I wanted to return, I am not sure it would be prudent. We sacrificed considerably when I came back in January. Twelve to fourteen-hour days with endless calls and emails do not make for a restful or therapeutic household. It would be easy to just walk away by saying that our medical situation doesn't allow me to return, but that would not be the whole truth.
2. The main reason I will not return is because I believe that too many members of the current City Council are more interested in social activism than good governance. I got a sense of this when they passed a FIP policy written by a special interest group, against the advice of the City Attorney and the top two police officials. This was most certainly a harbinger of things to come.
3. I knew I could not return on the night of the budget discussion and passage. Watching from afar, as a private citizen, I witnessed councilors who conflated facts, ignored information previously provided to them, and demonstrated disrespect for their department heads by diving deep into line items within department budgets and cutting line items without even knowing the impact the cuts would have, nor the ripple effects of cutting in one area. That budget meeting was a shocking display of micromanagement – or rather, mismanagement. It was dispiriting to see numerous councilors send the message loud and clear that they think they know more about City operations than the Department Heads who have devoted their entire careers to these pursuits.

4. When the Council cut the number of sworn officers by 30% (a completely arbitrary number culled from a national movement) I knew that the Burlington I had served, sacrificed for and loved would never be the same. Cutting the police budget – and preventing hiring until we reach 74 sworn - without first evaluating support services is unconscionable. I could go on at great length about all the reasons this is wrong, but let me cut to the point and say that I believe the Burlington City Council has created circumstances that are antithetical to public safety.

I learned a lot during my 5.5 months back at BPD. I sincerely admired your leadership in all things, but most notably your leadership during the COVID19 response was strong, consistent and the epitome of public caretaking. I will carry the lessons of Burlington's COVID19 response with me for the rest of my professional life.

It was inspiring to work as part of such a talented team of Department Heads. Indeed, being part of that team during the COVID19 onset and first few months was nothing short of amazing. Under your steady command creativity, adaptability, commitment and teamwork were on display 18+ hours a day as your City Leadership team responded to a global pandemic in an incredible way. I will miss working with the outstanding City Department Heads - they truly are an exceptional team.

In closing, I wish to express my steadfast support for you and your leadership. When we did not agree, you always assessed my position fairly and then proceeded. I appreciated that we worked together in a spirit of mutual respect, trust and honesty. I wish you all the best.

Kindest regards,



Jennifer L. Morrison