**From the Office of the Mayor 11/17/2022**

Members Reynoldsburg Division of Police,

 A few weeks ago I announced that the Reynoldsburg Division of Police would have the opportunity to participate in a survey of all things related to the work you do for the citizens of Reynoldsburg. I have attached the results to this email and I do hope you take the time to read it and know that I am thankful for the information it has provided me.

 The report does not contain any major surprises but it does show that we all have room to improve. I have reviewed the information with Chief Baker, Deputy Chief Grizzell, and Human Resources Director Sandra Boller and what follows is the beginning of an action plan to address the concerns listed. The survey was never intended to be a cure all, easy fix option, but more of a guide for what steps we can take to make the Reynoldsburg Division of Police even better as we move forward.

 As you will see in the survey, there are a number of things that are listed multiple times, items that cross multiple topics, and items that are only listed once. I have tried to place topics together by theme followed by suggested solutions. I will focus on the most common concerns, including communication, training, discipline, and other miscellaneous items. This is honestly the easy part, identifying the issues, designing a solution, but the difficulty will be in how we address those issues with real solutions, realistic timelines, and follow through to make sure what we say we are going to do actually gets done and be willing to alter the path as needed.

The most consistent issue presented revolved around communication, but there is more to it than that. Communication includes information, professionalism, openness to suggestions, and some procedural things. Information about the direction of the agency, the city, potential improvements to facilities/equipment, can be provided by the Orders of the Day, other more specific emails, signage in the Department in general, direction for the future of RPD and the city in general. We can also include some of the city’s efforts with Reynoldsburg Connects, and the 12 O’Clock Show as well.

Communication is also about how we treat each other, officer to officer, officer to dispatch, administration to everyone, and everything in between. We are all professionals, we all have the same goals to make the City a better place. So moving forward, if you have a suggestion we will begin a similar process that has already begun with the Dispatchers. A “google doc” will be available to all where suggestions can be submitted and reviewed by the Command staff and responses will be provided. Will every suggestion be adopted? No they won’t, but everyone will know what is being discussed and if it’s not able to be done everyone will know the reason why. This doesn’t replace talking to people through the chain of command, it is just another option. At the end of the month, those suggestions will be included in the Orders of the Day. Between the two, everyone should have a good idea as to a large number of the concerns.

 One great example is to do with the software currently being used and a potential replacement in the future. A partner City is currently investigating different options by investing in a firm to do the research, and once complete the results will be shared with us. This partnership will save the City significant funds while still getting the best recommendations on how to move forward. It is hoped that this new forum will allow this time of information to become more common knowledge to everyone.

Another frequently mentioned topic has to do with training, including FTO and individual training. Please know I am out of my element when it comes to this topic, but I will do my best to address some of the concerns. FTO is so important for our newest officers as well as the FTO’s themselves. There is a program in place, but I know that it has been altered a bit to adjust to modern law enforcement, including additional time for instruction/paperwork, etc. The goal of the FTO program is to prepare officers to be out in our community on their own with all the training and experience we can offer.

Once that phase is complete it is my responsibility to provide the best training possible for those showing the commitment to their profession here in Reynoldsburg. There are requirements for training for various positions, but the optional opportunities are available for those interested in advancing. There are of course F.O.P. contract procedures for some positions, but the opportunity for officers to advance is there for those that want to take advantage of it and we will work to make those opportunities available to everyone who is interested.

Consistency in the use of discipline, the use of discipline as a retaliatory option, and the subtle differences between the various progressions was a frequent topic in the survey. Discipline should be fair, consistent, and used as a teachable opportunity for improvement. The problem becomes in how you share the lessons learned without calling out individual officers or situations, because that should never be done, this isn’t a blame game, this is for everyone to find ways to be better. I will be meeting with the Command Staff, Building Reps, and the FOP to find a solution that meets the conditions that everyone can agree on.

The issue somewhat related is the idea of retaliation. The examples presented showed a reluctance to address certain issues/suggestions for improvement out of concern that some sort of retaliation would occur. I have dealt with this concern before as a teacher, which it seems a lot easier to identify retaliation. An administrator could alter the teacher’s classes, have them assigned to multiple rooms etc. but I will need to better understand how this would impact RPD. Either way, it’s an unacceptable action and I will work to reducing the anxiety this creates for everyone.

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The last topic is a catchall for everything else that may have been mentioned but only once or not as often. If I don’t specifically mention something it’s because I am trying to limit an already too long letter. We are staffed higher than other municipalities, but we also have a higher call volume. There are metrics used to determine staffing levels and we are on pace with them, however we will continue to adjust as our population goes. Please know that RPD will account for over 55% on the 2023 budget, so we will do the best we can based on available funds.

When we do hire officers there is a very specific process that is followed, including a 3rd party to perform background checks so each candidate is looked at fairly, all Civil Service rules are followed, and we select the best officers to join us. We also have professional growth plans for all levels of RPD and we will continue to offer training and advancement opportunities in cooperation with the F.O.P. Technology will always be evaluated and plans for improvements will be made if there is a significant difference in performance or aspect of office safety.

 I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey and this response with the step outlined for change. Obviously there will be more specific things to come, but I wanted you to have the full report and my initial thoughts on how to address the issues presented. This is just the start, and survey’s like this will be taken again after some time to see the progress that will be made.