

## A Message from the Mayor Video – June 4, 2020

TRANSCRIPT (SPANISH)

### **Mayor Steve Lentz:**

Hello, today I would like to address the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on Memorial Day last week. Few of us will ever forget those videoed images. Images of a man laying on the ground, defenseless with his hands handcuffed behind his back on his stomach with an officer's knee on his neck, the knee slowly pressing the life out of him over the course of over 8 minutes. I watched that video tape once and watched it partially through a second time and had to stop. I have not watched it since, I will never forget that. I think there are two emotions that watching that video tape emits from all of us. First is just a cry out for justice, it was so wrong the human heart cries out for justice for George Floyd and his family. And that is my prayer for swift justice, and I know it is for you too. And we can certainly pray and hope for that as well we should. But the second emotion is that of mistrust for police. That is just a natural inclination after watching that and it just begs several questions. First how about our own police department? What does our own police department think about the death of George Floyd? Can we trust our own police department? Have our police in our own town been trained to do this kind of thing? And so these are concerns that I think we need to address and to help out with that I am asking our Police Chief to speak to us and so at this point I would like to have Chief Eric Guenther have a word with us and then I will be back to wrap it up.

### **Police Chief Eric Guenther:**

Hi, I am Police Chief Eric Guenther, let me start by thanking you Mayor for bringing this discussion here today. First off, our department is shocked and outraged at the death of Mr. Floyd. What happened in Minneapolis really should never have happened on many levels. I wanted to talk to you today about what we do here in Mundelein to ensure that we are not caught in that position. First off, I truly believe that relationships with your community start well before a crisis happens. After a crisis has taken place like the one in Minneapolis it is very difficult to make repairs. So, it is important to do the leg work on the front end of this and create relationships and build trust with our community. I think it is every police department's responsibility to understand what the community make up is and who lives there and what the individual needs are and wants are of the people that live in the community. That is our responsibility as public officials. I think we have done a fantastic job in doing that and understanding that we are very diverse community. We have a great deal of different people who live here. We have almost a 41% Latino population. And so, one of the things that we did early on was to ensure that we created some communication with our Latino population so that we could slowly build trust. They understand what we are doing and what our attempts are to do, and we understand what their needs are. That is important to keep those lines of communication open and to continually pay attention to that. I think that one of the faults that law enforcement often has in these situations is everybody wants to make a statement now. Everybody wants to make a statement today based on the tragic events that took place last week in Minneapolis. But then things calm back down, and they come to what I guess what we call a normal a routine and that is where we fault. These are conversations that have to continue, these are efforts that need to be focused on long term.

There are training issues that are here, clearly if you watch these videos there was improper training that was applied in these situations. That is above and beyond the race issues that we have here, and we have to be aware of that and our profession has to be aware of that. One of the things that we do here at the police department is we keep specific stats to show what officers are doing on a day to day basis. We look at those stats monthly to ensure that we are not getting to skewed one way or the other. And I am proud to say that when we compare the statistics on stops, vehicle stops, that officers make and we look at the data on people that are involved in vehicle accidents in our town because that gives us a really good look at what the motoring public looks like I can say with all confidence that our officers are right in line with what census data shows us in terms of our populations. We are not too far, or we are not statistically disparate in one direction or another to who we are stopping. To me that is the first step in showing that our officers are not being prejudicial with the actions that they are taking. Secondly, we do a great deal of training, we focus on, we have focused for years on de-escalation and the concept of de-escalating situations so that force does not ever have to be utilized. We are a CALEA accredited organization, which means we are nationally accredited. We invite people from other locations to come in and inspect what we do on a day to day basis. Inspect our documentation, inspect our paperwork to ensure that we are doing it correctly. I think that important you know and I kind of compare it to, would you take your son or daughter to a hospital that is not accredited? Would you send your son or daughter to a university that did not have accreditation? Why would you not demand the same level of professionalism from your police department? It starts with communication and ends with communication and action that has to be taken. I love that everybody wants to make a statement and a saying in what happened. But really, I think what really means a lot is when you take those words into action. And that is what we intend to do here at the police department. We have already had discussions on where we need to go next, what training needs to be put into place, what conversations we need to be having here at the police department to ensure that we stay on the front end of this and we don't find ourselves where the officers and the Minneapolis Police Department found themselves. Again, I thank you very much Mayor for the opportunity to respond and I am always here and always available for questions if anybody has them. Thank you.

**Mayor Steve Lentz:**

Thank you, Chief Guenther, folks I love living in Mundelein and one reason is because we have an amazing police department here. The COVID-19 crisis as well as the tragic death of George Floyd and the outrage afterwards has created some very stressful times for all of us. We are all stressed out right now. And I have found it very helpful to talk things through with friends and family and I would advise you to do the same. There are many conversations that need to be had and so I would advise you to have those conversations with those around you, it's very helpful. Finally, for intraday updates on anything police related please go to the Mundelein Police Department Facebook page that is where they post intraday updates on anything going on that they need to get out to the general public. Go to the Facebook page for the Mundelein Police Department. Also, for other good information you can go to the Village's Facebook page and then also the website at Mundelein.org. Folks as a community we all grieve along with the rest of the world for the tragic death of George Floyd. I hope you have found this presentation helpful. Thank you for listening, have a good day.