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City of Duluth Communications Office

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SUBJECT: City leaders provide Statements on recent Incidents

BY: Kate Van Daele, Public Information Officer

City leaders provide Statements on recent Incidents

[Duluth, MN] Below are three statements Mayor Larson, Councilor Kennedy, and Duluth Police Chief Mike Tusken on the recent incidents across the state as they relate to George Floyd's death.

Statement from Mayor Larson:

"Minneapolis is our human brokenness. The murder of Mr. George Floyd, the lack of accountability for MPD, has laid open and bare the reality that the justice system has never been intended to be fair – it has been intended to favor.

We can all hear the lie that is the lack of arrest. We can all see the hurt and pain that is systemic racism. We can all feel the raw anger and fear.

We are past thoughts, prayers and hopes.

We are in every person that is in Minneapolis right now. We are the officer who has chosen to take advantage of power. We are the officers who stood as accomplice. We are the customer who unknowingly got caught into something that spiraled out of control. We are the protestors who are mad and demanding. And yes: we are the looters who have taken freedoms, land and value from others. Simply because we could.

We have all contributed to the fire of rage that burns.

We all bear responsibility for where this brokenness is rooted. It's rooted with us.

I stand with others across the state, the nation and the world demand that Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman that arrests be made, that justice be delivered and that Mr. Floyd's death be named for what it was: murder."

Statement from Councilor Kennedy:

"To our beloved community, I stand before you today with humility, and vulnerability as a person of African Heritage. George Floyd will forever be in our hearts and on our minds.

On behalf of the Duluth City Council, we would like to offer our condolences to George Floyd's family. We see and hear what is going on, and are closely monitoring the situation in Minneapolis, and how this impacts our Duluth community. As a Council, we want and need to allow space for people to grieve in a healthy and peaceful way. Here in Duluth we respect the peaceful gatherings that have taken place so far, and ask that community members continue to gather with social distancing safety measures during this pandemic. We understand and appreciate the need to protest, we ask that this is done without violence and without jeopardizing your health.

Our local governmental leadership has been proactive in listening and hearing the needs of the African Heritage/Black community. This week City Council members unanimously voted in favor of an ordinance forming the Duluth African Heritage Commission. This ordinance will ensure that the views of the African Heritage Community are incorporated in the decision making, future planning and stewardship of the City of Duluth. The commission will endeavor to act as a guide in development of public policy, planning and services so that the African Heritage community is adequately represented.

Most important we acknowledge the realities of historic and present racism and trauma that continually impacts feelings of safety. Our council leadership will continue to work to ensure that all lives are valued and all people feel relevant.

As a sign of solidarity, we are asking Duluth residents to light a candle to honor the life of George Floyd tonight at 9:25 p.m. This is one way that we can stand with George's family, and with the black community during this time. In addition, the City of Duluth will be lighting Enger Tower in gold tonight to represent candles being lit by our community as a way to add our voices and our hearts with the City of Minneapolis."

Statement from Duluth Police Chief Mike Tusken

"The death of Mr. George Floyd is a tragedy. In watching the video, I am still sickened, saddened, angered, and embarrassed. Mr. Floyd should not have been made to beg for his next and last breath.

It took one officer to intervene or redirect the response to change the outcome, which would have ultimately saved Mr. Floyd's life. He deserved dignity and respect. Every person does. As law enforcement professionals in lifesaving organizations, we all have a responsibility to preserve life and do it with honor and dignity.

We must never forget that our authority is granted to us by our social contract with our citizens. We must have their support and cooperation to build safe communities together. We are given immense responsibility as community caretakers and with this responsibility comes immense expectations-expectations that we will honor and care for you by upholding the oath we promised to do.

Those among us who cannot keep this promise must leave this noble profession to those who will."

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