



News Release

From the City of Kirkland, Washington

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 13, 2019

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Joint Statement from Police Chief Cherie Harris and City Manager Kurt Triplett

This statement is in response to concerns that have been expressed by the YMCA related to the arrest of a young suspect by the Kirkland Police Department at the Kirkland Teen Union Building (KTUB) in Kirkland on September 5, 2019. First, the City is dedicated to being a safe, welcoming and inclusive community. Over the last year the City has taken a number of actions to further that commitment. The City is also dedicated to continuing our commitment to community policing, including building relationships with Kirkland's young people. We believe that through further dialogue with the YMCA, our Kirkland Youth Council, school resource officers, teens, and community members we can continue to have a healthy and safe environment for all Kirkland residents.

As background, a School Resource Officer (SRO) at Juanita High School was notified by school district staff at approximately 12:41 p.m. on September 5 that a group of young men was trespassing on school property and planning an assault against a student at the school. The SRO was told that the young men had been asked to leave the campus multiple times by staff. The SRO initiated an investigation, and the young men fled school property.

Throughout the day, four calls came into the 9-1-1 dispatch center involving the same group of young men. One call involved a package theft that was called in by a homeowner after watching the theft via his video doorbell. The homeowner provided a photo of the person, who was wearing a red shirt and khaki pants. That photo was distributed to all police officers on duty, including the arresting officer. Subsequent calls involved a theft of a tip jar from a local business and the theft of personal property from an individual at the transit station. Later that afternoon, the victim of the theft at the transit station told officers that a young man matching the description the police had been receiving throughout the day, including the image captured by the video doorbell, had entered KTUB.

KTUB is a City owned facility operated under contract by the YMCA. Police officers were given access to the building by a teen. There were no staff at the front desk, but officers immediately spoke to an intern that walked the officers back to the location of the young man. That young man was then arrested inside of KTUB. During the arrest, the young man attempted to pull away from the officer and was taken to the ground, where he was placed into handcuffs without further incident or injury. During the incident, however, one officer admits to swearing. This is not acceptable behavior in this situation. The Kirkland Police Department acknowledges this and will respond appropriately.

After the arrest, Kirkland police officers discovered that the young man had an outstanding misdemeanor arrest warrant in Everett. Officers from the Everett Police Department travelled to meet our officers in order to take the young man into custody. Kirkland Police also filed charges against the young man for theft in the third degree, a gross misdemeanor. These are the facts leading up to the arrest as we understand them today.

Later in September, the City Manager and the Mayor were notified of concerns that the staff of the YMCA had regarding the arrest of the young man. The City takes these types of concerns very seriously. After being notified by the YMCA, Police Chief Cherie Harris initiated an investigation into the arrest. The investigation includes a formal use of force review, interviews of witnesses, a review of the police report, 9-1-1 calls, and multiple video recordings from KTUB. One key element of the investigation is the Chief's need to carefully review the YMCA's videos. Those videos were provided to the City on the afternoon of Tuesday, October 29 and are now being reviewed as part of the Chief's investigation. When the Chief completes her investigation, all findings, including the 9-1-1 calls and transcripts and the videos, will be released to the public and made available online on the City's website. The posted videos will have the faces of minors redacted as required by law.

On October 9, the Mayor, City Manager and City Attorney met with the Executive Director of the YMCA, as well as YMCA staff and board members, to better understand their concerns. Over the following weeks, Kirkland staff also provided the YMCA with background information about the 9-1-1 calls, the status of the Chief's investigation, and the video the City's cameras at KTUB recorded. This same group met again Friday, November 1 and discussed positive joint actions that Kirkland and the YMCA could undertake to help ensure that KTUB is a safe place for Kirkland teens, KTUB staff and the broader community.

The City has been a strong partner with the YMCA for many years and is confident that concerns from this event can be addressed in a collaborative fashion. Some of this work has already begun. On November 6, an SRO, a neighborhood resource officer (NRO), and a Kirkland Police captain met with KTUB staff to continue the work to strengthen our relationship.

The YMCA and the City have also outlined future potential actions that could be taken to develop better systems for responding to these types of situations, as well as strategies for building stronger relationships between teens and law enforcement. Possible additional actions include a meeting between the City and the YMCA board, the evaluation of potential changes to police practices for responding to situations at KTUB and strategies for being more deliberate about creating positive opportunities for police officers to engage with young people and KTUB staff. The City and the YMCA are also discussing a possible forum at KTUB for teens, parents, KTUB staff, police and City officials, where they can discuss strategies for ensuring positive outcomes when teens interact with police officers.

We understand that it is human nature to experience events differently based on our backgrounds and circumstances. We take very seriously the ways in which this event was experienced by KTUB staff and youth. Kirkland is committed to continuing an ongoing dialogue to increase understanding of our differing perspectives and make any necessary changes to create deeper, stronger relationships.

Both parties clearly desire to partner to create an atmosphere where police, teens, KTUB staff and community members feel safe, and where both agencies have clear expectations and communication when similar situations arise. The City is dedicated to making this partnership successful.

To view the 9-1-1 calls and all videos from the arrest, please visit:
https://www.kirklandwa.gov/depart/CMO/Reports/KTUB_Incident_Report.htm.

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