



News Release

From the City of Kirkland, Washington

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Statement from Mayor Penny Sweet

Before we begin tonight's meeting, I would like to make a brief statement on behalf of the Council in response to the press conference held last week by the Greater Seattle YMCA. At that press conference, the YMCA expressed concerns relating to the arrest of a teenage African American suspect by the Kirkland Police Department at the Kirkland Teen Union Building known as KTUB. This event once again challenges us to courageously engage in one of the most difficult conversations our community can have – the historic and current relations between police and African Americans. For those of you that are unfamiliar with what occurred, additional details can be found in the joint statement issued by the City Manager and the Chief of Police. Copies of the statement are available in the chambers tonight and the statement and additional information can be found on the City website.

Several years ago, Kirkland dedicated itself to becoming a safe, welcoming, and inclusive community. These are not just words to this Council. These are attributes we strive every day to achieve, so that Kirkland can be one of the best places in America to live, work and play.

We cannot be welcoming and inclusive if we are not safe. Our officers were at KTUB in response to a series of 9-1-1 calls from residents and businesses, in order to keep our community safe. My colleagues and I want to express our deep appreciation to the brave and dedicated men and women of the Kirkland police department. We know that police work is challenging and involves making quick decisions in difficult situations. We have some of the best trained and most caring officers in the nation. We are so grateful for their service.

At the same time, we want everyone to feel safe and respected, regardless of their race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability or immigration status. Therefore, the City Council supports the Police Chief and City Manager as they evaluate what transpired at KTUB. We must learn if the actions of our officers met the high standards we expect of them, and that they expect of themselves. This Council has been continually updated and we know that the Police Chief is conducting the investigation thoroughly, fairly, impartially and transparently. When the investigation is complete, the report will be posted publicly and distributed widely. If mistakes are identified, we will fix them. If improvements are identified, we will implement them.

This Council and our City staff do not shy away from difficult conversations about race. We engage them directly. Over the last year, the City has taken a number of steps to reinforce our safe, welcoming and

inclusive commitment. The City completed an extensive outreach effort to gather input on the community's expectations of community policing. This effort included surveys, several focus groups and opportunities for community members to share their hopes and concerns directly with myself and Police Chief Harris. We are also working with Leadership Eastside to facilitate critical community dialogues with Kirkland residents and businesses around issues of race and equity. Lastly, we provided nationally recognized implicit bias training for all police, all City staff, the Municipal Court Judge, Kirkland prosecutors and the City Council. These are not one-time efforts, we understand that this work requires a lasting commitment.

This insightful training taught us the importance of understanding the history, perspectives and tension between police officers and historically marginalized groups. We know that we all experience events very differently based on our backgrounds and circumstances. Kirkland is committed to ongoing conversations to increase understanding of our differing experiences and we will make any necessary changes to create stronger relationships with all members of our community.

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