

December 4, 2020

For Immediate Release

As this community is aware, it has been 18 months since we lost one of our own, Troy Hodge. The NYS Attorney General's (AG) office exclusively took over the investigation into Troy's death because four Lockport Police officers, along with Niagara County deputies, were involved. We have been waiting for the results of the investigation by the AG's office, alongside Troy's family, for over 18 months now. However, we were notified just yesterday, that although the AG has been investigating the circumstances surrounding Troy's death for over 18 months, they still do not have the results of same. It is important that our residents understand that the AG has requested that the City refrain from any involvement in said investigation, beyond placing the four officers involved on desk duty.

Despite the City, and Troy's family, still waiting for the AG's results of their investigation, the AG's office has made the questionable decision to release evidence from this case, but only some - the body cameras of the responding deputies. Although I do not agree with the AG's decision to do so, and sincerely wish that Troy's family had a say in this very private matter, the City has no control over same. We want transparency in this matter. We have been told not to release anything, as there is an ongoing investigation, and yet the AG's office has decided to release some of the evidence on its own.

As we continue to mourn the passing of Troy Hodge, Chief Abbott and I have worked closely together to implement a litany of technological tools, training procedures, and procedural guidelines that will assist our officers in properly handling the myriad issues that they confront on a daily basis.

Very shortly after Troy Hodge's death, the City outfitted every single officer with a body camera. Further, the footage from the cameras now uploads to a cloud service so that it can be reviewed by department heads at any time.

In the summer of 2019, the Lockport Police Department was the first department in NYS to be part of a pilot program which equips officers with iPads to provide them live access to mental health counselors, while they are responding to calls that have a mental health component. This service was expanded to enable every road officer to have one by December of 2019, further assisting officers with mental health calls.

I have called for community forums throughout the last 18 months to discuss police interaction with our citizens. The Peacemakers from Niagara Falls now have a branch in Lockport, and have met throughout the year. We are far ahead of the State's deadline for the Police Policy Review plan, due to the State in the Spring of 2021, and have met multiple times throughout this year to work on our Plan.

My budget for 2021 provided for new training for the LPD, supported by the Chief, that will assist in de-escalation, utilizing different procedures in calls that have a mental health component, and specific training focusing on officers' implied biases.

Although none of these procedures, tools, or training courses can bring back Troy Hodge, our hope is that they will prevent a similar tragedy in the future. The City will continue to work closely with the Lockport Police Board, which handles all matters involving the Police Department pursuant to the City Charter, to respond appropriately once the City is provided the long-awaited findings of the AG's investigation.