



Luke A. Bronin
Mayor

July 13, 2020

Chief Jason Thody
Hartford Public Safety Complex
253 High Street
Hartford, CT 06103

RE: Discipline related to Hartford Police Department Special Investigative Report #20-072 & Connecticut State Police Inquiry

Dear Chief Thody,

This letter outlines my assessment of the May 31, 2020 incident in which your city-owned vehicle made contact with a guard rail on Route 154, resulting in minor damage to the right side of your vehicle, as well as the subsequent reporting and documentation of the incident. This letter also serves to notify you of the discipline that I have chosen to impose.

There are four factors which weigh heavily in my assessment of this incident and the appropriate remedial measures:

- (1) You reported the incident to your direct supervisor, Chief Operating Officer Thea Montanez, the same day that the incident occurred and provided her with pictures of the damage to the vehicle. Chief Operating Officer Montanez informed me of the incident that same day. You also documented the damage to the guard rail with photographs and provided that documentation to the Hartford Police Department. Your prompt notification to your chain of command that day demonstrates no intent or effort whatsoever to conceal either the incident or any damage to city property.
- (2) The State Trooper who responded to the scene subsequently found no damage to the guard rail or any other property, and the Middlesex State's Attorney confirmed to my office that, as there was no damage to any property other than the city vehicle, there was no legal obligation to contact the State Police following the incident.
- (3) At the time the incident occurred, you were conducting official duties. Specifically, you were responding to ongoing protests because you wanted to help ensure that protests in Hartford did not escalate as they had in other Connecticut cities that afternoon.
- (4) I am aware that, throughout the Sunday on which the incident occurred, you were in regular contact with multiple stakeholders, including myself, a prominent pastor, an organizer of the protest scheduled for the following day, and your command staff and multiple officers of the Hartford Police Department, and that you were anticipating the need to respond personally to protests that day, as you had on the previous day.

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Accordingly, because you promptly notified your direct supervisor, and because I have no reason to believe that the incident was the result of anything other than distracted driving at a time when you were actively responding to city responsibilities, this incident does not cause me to lose confidence in you and in your leadership of the Hartford Police Department.

However, there are a number of aspects of your handling of this incident that do not meet the standards the City of Hartford expects from its employees and its Department heads in particular.

- First, the City of Hartford policy related to Take Home Vehicles Assigned for Overnight Use, which was adopted in 2013, requires that vehicle operators “contact the local or State police immediately” to report any collision. Even though the Middlesex State’s Attorney has confirmed you had no obligation to call the State police according to State law, this city policy applies to your incident. While I do not believe that you were ever provided with a copy of this policy or affirmatively required to read and acknowledge it, which is a failure of myself and my administration, you nonetheless have a responsibility to be familiar with that policy and to follow it.
- Second, you have acknowledged driving distractedly and, as demonstrated by your own account of the incident, by the damage to the vehicle, and by a witness report from the time of the incident, your vehicle clearly veered from the lane of travel to make contact with the guard rail. While State law exempts law enforcement officers from distracted driving laws, you have an obligation to take greater care to ensure the safety of others on the road and protection of the city vehicle.
- Third, while you reported this incident both to the Chief Operating Officer and to the Hartford Police Department for investigation promptly, neither you nor your staff placed a sufficiently high priority on ensuring that the subsequent reporting was as detailed or clear as it should have been. While I know that there were more pressing priorities during that period of time, I also know that you expect your officers to thoroughly and carefully document their conduct, and it is important that you set a strong example.

While the Internal Audit Commission may choose to investigate this matter further, and while I will review any findings they may make, for the above reasons, I believe the following discipline is necessary and appropriate at this time:

- You are required to fully repay the City of Hartford for the damage to your vehicle, in the amount of \$3,324.66, notwithstanding the fact that the damage occurred while you were using your vehicle in the course of your official duties.
- This letter of written reprimand will be placed permanently in your personnel file.

I want to reiterate that, notwithstanding this assessment, I retain full confidence in you and in your leadership as the Chief of Police for the City of Hartford. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Luke A. Bronin
Mayor