June 8, 2020

Dear Chief Gillette, Mayor Barnett, and the Downers Grove Village Council,

We, the undersigned Downers Grove community members, have been greatly angered, hurt, and frustrated by the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers. The system has failed another Black man, and we are anxiously waiting to see if all officers responsible for his death will face consequences. Centuries of systemic racism, violence, and the continuing legacy of slavery have led to the murder of people of color by police which we stand adamantly against. We are writing to you to ask what you are doing, as the Mayor, Village Council, and Police Chief, to ensure that your officers are not abusing their power and are being held accountable for their actions.

Chicago has a long, brutal history of racism, segregation, and discrimination against Black Americans and other people of color. This history also extends to the surrounding suburbs, including Downers Grove. Descriptions of living in the suburbs shared by Black community members, including this account of growing up in Naperville, shed light on the racism and discrimination our community members face.

While we greatly appreciate the June 2, 2020 statement from the Village of Downers Grove, words alone will not be enough. The Village of Downers Grove, the Mayor, and the Police Chief must take a strong stance against police brutality, racism, and hate, including in social media groups associated with Downers Grove. We call on you to listen to the voices and stories of our Black and Brown community members. We call on you to communicate with Downers Grove residents the specific changes you will make to ensure the Downers Grove Police Department (DGPD) is protecting the rights and lives of people of color and is held accountable for its actions.

In August of 2018, Chief of Police Shanon Gillette and the Downers Grove Police Department agreed to 10 Shared Principles designed to build trust between law enforcement and communities of color. Since the signing of the agreement, the DGPD has not published any plans to implement those principles. We therefore call on the DGPD to increase transparency by swiftly making public its current and future plans for adopting each of the Shared Principles. The DGPD must provide a detailed description of departmental programs, policies, and agreements that are designed to respond to the questions in the attached appendixes.

Thank you for your leadership and guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic. We love our Village and hope Mayor Barnett, the Village Council, and Chief Gillette will extend similar leadership to protect our communities of color and increase the transparency of DGPD operations and policies. We await your response. Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned 313 Downers Grove Community Members
Appendix I: DGPD Training and Policies

● Are DGPD officers instructed to exhaust every possible option before using force? How are the officers trained to de-escalate altercations by using peaceful conflict resolution strategies?

● Are the officers in the DGPD required to give a verbal warning to civilians before drawing their weapon or using excessive force?

● Is there a clear and enforced use-of-force continuum that details what weapons and force are acceptable in a wide variety of civilian-police interactions? What is this policy?

● Are the officers in the DGPD forbidden from shooting at moving vehicles and using carotid restraints (chokeholds, strangleholds, etc.) and hog-tying methods? Furthermore, are they forbidden from transporting civilians in uncomfortable positions, such as face down in a vehicle?

● How are the officers in the DGPD trained to perform and seek necessary medical action after using excessive force?

● Does the DGPD require officers to report each time they threaten or use force on civilians and make those reports publicly available?

● What training and resources are given to DGPD officers to prepare them to intervene if they witness another officer using excessive force?

● What are the DGPD’s procedures for reprimanding officers who engage in misconduct, including the use of excessive force, failure to intervene while other officers use excessive force, hateful language, or discrimination?

● What procedures are in place to implement diversity in hiring practices and thoroughly and continually vet DGPD officers to ensure they do not have a history of abuse, racism, xenophobia, homophobia / transphobia, or discrimination?

● What impact does having police officers in our CSD99 schools have on the education and wellbeing of our students? Furthermore, what measures are being taken to ensure that our students of color are not disproportionately targeted by the police?
Appendix II: DGPD Information Request

- Since 2000, how many officer suspensions and discharges have been issued by the Police Chief or their designee(s), regardless of later holdings by the Downers Grove Board of Fire and Police Commissioners or an Arbitrator?

- Since 2000, how many officer suspensions and discharges issued by the Police Chief or their designee(s) have been nullified, overturned, or otherwise reversed by the Grievance Procedure laid out in Article 9 of the 2018-2021 Labor Agreement between the Village of Downers Grove and the Illinois Fraternal Order of Police Labor Council or similar Grievance Procedures contained in the preceding agreements between the Village and the Fraternal Order of Police?

- Since 2000, how many officer suspensions and discharges issued by the Police Chief or their designee(s) have been nullified, overturned, or otherwise reversed by the Arbitration process laid out in Section C. of Article 9 of the 2018-2021 Labor Agreement between the Village of Downers Grove and the Illinois Fraternal Order of Police Labor Council or similar Arbitration Processes contained in the preceding agreements between the Village and the Fraternal Order of Police?

- Since 2000, how many officer suspensions or discharges issued by the Police Chief or their designee(s) have been nullified, overturned, or otherwise reversed by the Downers Grove Board of Fire and Police Commissioners?

- Since 2015, how many special meetings have been scheduled or held by the Downers Grove Board of Fire and Police Commissioners?

- Since 2015, for how many special meetings scheduled or held by the Downers Grove Board of Fire and Police Commissioners was public notice given more than 48 hours in advance of the meeting?

- Since 2015, how many special meetings scheduled or held by the Downers Grove Board of Fire and Police Commissioners were in regard to police officer discipline, suspension, or discharge?