

City Manager Statement Regarding Jeffrey Blackwell Matter

"In early September of 2015, as City Manager I initiated several leadership changes within the Cincinnati Police Department, including appointing Elliot Isaac as the City's new Chief of Police. On September 9, 2015, I provided a detailed memorandum to the Mayor and Council informing them of the decision to make these leadership changes and explained the basis behind the changes. This memorandum was made widely available to all interested parties. At least a year or more leading up to the staff changes, the Department had devolved into a significant state of disarray. Morale had deteriorated and the command and control leadership structure was becoming highly ineffective. The Department was lacking direction. All of this not only jeopardized the overall effectiveness of a nationally renowned police department, but also put in jeopardy the overall safety and well-being of our residents.

Throughout this process I had numerous discussions with former Chief Blackwell. As I do with all of my department heads, I make myself available as necessary to provide coaching and guidance that hopefully helps them be successful as leaders. I did not treat the former Chief any differently. Despite this, conditions within the Department did not improve. Ultimately the overall environment within the Department had deteriorated to the point that individuals within the Department began to directly seek me out and express their concerns, which were quite serious. At least 13 CPD personnel up and down the chain of command provided personal statements that outlined a myriad of issues.

The dysfunctionality of the Department became a significant distraction when we needed to focus on addressing the spike in crime. After taking into consideration all of the factors associated with this situation, I made the decision to terminate Blackwell for cause. I continue to stand behind my September 9, 2015 memorandum to the Mayor and Council and the ultimate decision to terminate Blackwell for cause. Although unfortunate, this was an unavoidable decision. It was a decision made in the best interest of the Department and thereby the entire city.

With regard to the complaint filed by Mr. Blackwell through his legal counsel, this was not a surprise. Given he had obtained legal representation prior to his termination, we expected that this would occur and made preparations. This is not unusual in that these types of claims are filed periodically as a part of due process and executive level terminations. Given the cost and inherent uncertainty of litigation, the City reached a favorable resolution of the issues.

It has been suggested that the appointment of current Chief Isaac was race based. This assertion is absolutely untrue. My decision to appoint Mr. Isaac as Chief was based on what I felt the Department and city needed at the time in terms of law enforcement leadership. Chief Isaac possesses the proper temperament and law enforcement acumen, in addition to being familiar with the Department and city. He also has the respect of his peers and colleagues. Since making these leadership changes the Department has moved beyond just stabilization and the overall environment is now indicative of high morale, enhanced productivity and a high performing law enforcement organization. Under his leadership, morale is up, we continue to innovate and, as we will soon be more formally reporting, crime is down."