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ROBERT G. DONOVAN
Alderman, 8th District

Cop's firing warrants more comment

**Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan
October 16, 2014**

I'll begin by saying this—I realize full well how volatile this situation is. I further realize that there may indeed be a significant number of people who may disagree with what I'm about to say, but what's right is right. I am here today because I believe an injustice was done yesterday in the firing of Officer Christopher Manney, and I cannot stand by and allow that to occur without comment.

The shooting at Red Arrow Park was undoubtedly a tragedy every which way you look at it. But one does not address or attempt to alleviate the pains of one tragedy by creating another. Yet that is precisely what occurred yesterday afternoon.

The firing of Officer Christopher Manney was, in my opinion, ill-conceived, unwarranted and politically motivated.

I have spent time with Chris Manney and gotten to know him, and I find him not only to be a good officer, but a good human being. You ought to read some of the letters he's received from people on his beat. I can assure you he didn't wake up that April morning thinking about who he was going to shoot that day.

Sadly, he has become the scapegoat for the racially-charged political environment we live in. It's my understanding that the chief fired Officer Manney without even talking to him; without getting his side of the story one-on-one.

We're not talking about a part-time paper route. We're talking about a man's career, his vocation, and how you can fire someone without first looking him in the eye and explaining your reasoning is beyond me.

In addition, even if Officer Manney was guilty of these two rule violations, punishment in the past and in similar circumstances never rose to the level of termination.

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The Chief willingly admitted that the use of force was justified given the circumstances. However, he also indicated that Officer Manney made assumptions that Dontre Hamilton was mentally ill and homeless. Well, if Officer Manney did make that assumption, I'm sure it was based on his experience working downtown where there are a large number of individuals living with those tragic circumstances.

As a matter of fact, at a recent gathering of security directors for all the major downtown buildings, homelessness and the mentally ill were the main topics of discussion. These security directors informed me that MPD will no longer respond to those issues on private property and commented that that they are left to fend for themselves.

As for not patting down a homeless person (and I'm using the chief's terminology), it would be poor policing not to do so. Just ask any cop, and they'll tell you that it is not at all uncommon to find some type of weapon on a homeless individual. Let's face it, they live on the streets and the streets are violent.

Lastly, I am very concerned about how this decision will impact the already incredibly low morale of our officers. I fear that an increasing number of officers will put their blinders on and do the absolute minimum, fearful that any difficult decision made on the streets will come back to haunt them and be second-guessed by armchair command staffers and Monday morning quarterbacks.

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