



"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Dr. King's "I have a dream" speech challenged American society to look beyond superficial distinctions. His dream was a dream that every person shares. To be judged not on preconceived, ill-informed notions, but rather on who they really are, what they stand for and what they have actually accomplished. It is a dream where all are free to move wherever they wish in society and accomplish to the best of their ability as they desire. If we are ever to get closer to seeing the true character of each person, we must stop placing barriers between ourselves and others. Only when we eliminate these barriers and we look at a man, a woman, or a child, and see each as a fellow human being will we have achieved true freedom and integration of all equally into our society.

In the wake of George Floyd's killing and the ensuing protests against racial discrimination and incidents of police violence, we wish to reiterate Wayland's core values and engage in a community discussion of these important issues.

Wayland has been ahead of other communities both in its understanding and reaction to racial discrimination and to unacceptable work or work-related behavior. Wayland has a clearly stated policy of the behavior expected of Town officials and employees. "It is the policy of the Town of Wayland that associated Boards, Committees, governing bodies and employees conduct their work and work-related activities with respect for all employees, residents and individuals conducting business with the Town. Any action, inaction, gesture, or language that would offend a reasonable individual or that a reasonable individual would deem unwelcome will not be tolerated. Harassment or discrimination under any circumstances is prohibited." The Wayland Police Department has added its own statement of core values, among them:

**Integrity** - We are committed to the enforcement of laws and the preservation of order and property. We are honest, truthful, and consistent in our words and actions, and therefore worthy of the public's trust. We exercise discretion in a manner that is beyond reproach. We do not accept gifts or special considerations as a consequence of our office.

**Professionalism** - We treat the public and our colleagues with courtesy and respect. We understand that our appearance, words, and demeanor contribute to the public's confidence in us. We are responsive to the community and deliver services promptly and efficiently.

**Fairness and Impartiality** - We act with fairness, restraint, and impartiality in carrying out our duties. We work with the community to continually understand and overcome cultural influences and unconscious biases. We understand that our actions, combined with the way we treat members of the community, contribute to our legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

**Advocacy and Empathy** - We have compassion for victims of crime. As members of the community, we have respect for and promote the diversity of the community. We advocate for social and other supportive services for victims, youth, and others involved in the criminal justice system.

The Wayland Police Department, your police department, is a true community department, made up of 24 men and women, almost half of whom are your neighbors or family of neighbors. The officers who live in Wayland have children in the public schools. Those who grew up here graduated from Wayland



High School. They are part of the fabric that makes up the Wayland community. They have chosen a police career to give back to their community.

We would like to share with you that the proposals surrounding accreditation, education and training, which are being discussed in Massachusetts and elsewhere, have already been addressed in Wayland. Earlier this year the Wayland Police Department attained re-certification from the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission, based on Wayland's established professional standards, which are considered best practices for the profession.

Last winter, we entered negotiations for a new contract, under the guidance and with the support of the Board of Selectmen. During negotiations, we spent time reviewing police officer education and training. The police officers who make up your Police Department here in Wayland are highly educated. We discussed the changing needs of the community and the changing expertise needed from police. We discussed how to recruit the most qualified officers for a modern police department and how to encourage officers to continue with their education in much needed areas. Rather than limit police officers to the traditional education in criminal justice and related fields, we placed value on degrees such as emergency management, finance, computer science, and psychology. Police officers today are expected to respond to more complex and more diverse issues. Wayland has supported and continues to support well-educated and well-trained police officers.

The commitment to public service of every police officer and the range of issues that they address was no more evident than during the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency. To provide sufficient police coverage for the community and maintain safe working conditions, all officers agreed to a schedule change and detectives were reassigned to patrol. Police officers performed such tasks as delivering meals and prescription medication to the most vulnerable residents. They also responded to an increased number of domestic and mental health crises. We have heard recent suggestions that police should not be responding to such calls. We support additional and continuing resources and services to help residents experiencing domestic and mental health challenges. However, when distressed residents call 911, they are in a state of emergency. Police are first responders. They are trained and able to respond promptly and to assess and address the immediate issues. Delays in responding to these types of calls could have serious consequences.

We are hopeful that, here in Wayland, we will continue to work together as a community and value the hard work and dedication of each and every officer as they continue to provide the highest level of service. Their dedication to the community will not waiver. We plan to host further discussions on these important issues. Together, we hope to continue the work of achieving true freedom and integration of all.

Louise Miller, Town Administrator

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