From: davidwalrod@bresnan.net
To: Mayor Staff; Grp. City Council and City Web Site; PD WEB Mail
Subject: Ludicrous cries to defund the Police. Shower & Locker room.
Date: Sunday, August 2, 2020 11:50:24 AM

I wanted to reach out on this subject matter to you folks and show support for our Law Enforcement community which includes the Missoula Police Department, the Missoula County Sheriff's Office, and the Montana Highway Patrol. I feel that I have a pretty good perspective on this subject after retiring in 2017 with 33 years as a Deputy Sheriff & Detective with the Missoula County Sheriff's Office. I started my career in 1984.

Defunding the Police is not going to solve any of the issues of racism, excessive force, or the mental health issues of a city or county. By defunding the Police it will only result in lawlessness, a huge increase in crimes to include violent crime and illicit drug use, and a much greater safety risk to Law Enforcement and the public community.

Not one of the ways to remedy these issues that I can think of includes defunding the Police. In actuality what is needed are calls for more and better training, and an increase in wages of officers to illicit a larger pool of quality applicants for these extremely demanding jobs. This is the very real reality of Law Enforcement. I speak from experience in saying that our departments always seem to be struggling to increase officer numbers whether that is from a lack of funding and/or from the lack of a quality hiring pool. Officer safety and public safety are paramount. We continue to put both at risk because of low manpower levels in most agencies across the state and the country for that matter. It's alarming to witness the decline of applicants for any of these Law Enforcement entities. When I applied in the early 1980's there often times would be 200-300 applicants or more for these Law Enforcement agencies. If we were lucky we might have one to three positions to be filled. Now it seems difficult to get more than 15-20 people to apply.

There are a lot of issues that our country and our states are facing and we have been confronted with for years. There is not going to be a simple fix. There is the homeless population that seems to be growing in number, the mental health equation, and in addition affordable housing. That being said, defunding the Police does not contribute to solving any of these problems! We need to support our Law Enforcement agencies nationwide instead of trying to break them down.

Locker Shower Room Facility:
I wanted to talk briefly about one more subject which is the proposal to provide the Missoula Police Officers with a reasonable and much needed shower and locker room facility. Is this something that is needed for your officers, absolutely! There are not many jobs where a person in performance of his or her duties might "have the pleasure" of facing at times what would seem to be an overwhelming variety of different situations and substances. Many which could be toxic in nature. The officer's at your department desperately need a shower and locker room facility for their safety, and so they do not potentially expose their families by "bringing this home with them". Here are just a few of the reasons that I can think of from my many years on the department to express this point.

Officer's are often times unfortunately exposed to a variety of threats to their safety that the average citizen fortunately does not have to deal with and could only imagine what these are. I'll point out just a few instances to prove my point. I had a person we were attempting to

arrest one night bite me on my ring finger of my right hand through my leather duty glove clear to the bone. This person then preceded to spit saliva and blood from his mouth in my face. I had to get a tetanus shot, stitches to my finger, and was tested for Hepatitis B and Aids. In working on any number of incidents one of your officers may be exposed to large amounts of blood, urine, and saliva. There are too many accidents and assaults that I have responded to personally to even begin to comment on the many times where I was exposed to these bodily substances. Your officers person, uniforms, and clothing will be contaminated with these bodily fluids just as I was when this happens to them. I did not want to bring this into my home, but I was forced to just as your officers are, because we too did not have this available to us either. This is just talking about bodily fluids and does not include the myriad of other substances that Law Enforcement is exposed to.

I was a first responder to the Alberton train derailment at Petty Creek where a rail car full of liquid ammonia spilled. There was one fatality on the train from the person breathing in this deadly vapor. My clothing became saturated with the chemical by me being in very close proximity to the actual derailment. Almost immediately a sever headache overcame me as I was standing outside breathing in the chemical as I worked to close down traffic on Interstate 90 to prevent the public from driving into this scene any further. All of our Sheriff's Office team who were with me on this call had to go to the Emergency Room after this event to be checked over. I suffered damaged lungs by breathing in this vapor, and this resulted in me being sick for a week with chemical pneumonia. This is just an example. Any of your officers might have to deploy his or her pepper spray in the performance of their job, and this is also certainly something that I would not want to have to bring into my home. Unfortunately I had to as we did not have a shower and locker room facility at the Sheriff's Office either. Officers never know what a truck or train might be carrying and how potentially fatal it could be to them. I could go on but you get the point.

The Missoula Police Department needs to provide a shower and locker room facility for all of the fine Officers working on your department. It is critical to their safety and well being as well as their families. I appreciate your time in listening to me.

Sincerely,

David Walrod 434