

Fall River Police Union: Do not remove \$480,000 from the police department, it is needed

The following letter was sent to us from the Fall River Police Union:

City Council President Cliff Ponte,

I write to you today in regards to Mayor Paul Coogan's appropriation order request to transfer funds from the Fall River Police Department's FY 2020 budget to the Community Maintenance, Expenses and Insurance, which is scheduled to be voted upon today. Specifically, the Mayor is requesting unexpended funds be removed from the police department budget, which consists of \$24,777 from Administrative Salaries, \$175,000 Administrative Expenses, and \$280,223 from Police Salaries, totaling \$480,000.

As you know, those funds had been allocated by the Fall River City Council enabling the Fall River Police Department to provide specific services to the citizens of Fall River during FY 2020 to include reactive patrols, proactive patrols, and fund the expense of overtime costs associated with those services as well as funding the expense of Police Officer attendance at the various court proceedings required to prosecute the bad actors within our community.

2020 was not a typical year and no one predicted that a virus such as Covid-19 would have made an appearance and wreaked havoc in every community around the globe. Fall River was not spared in that widespread impact and many entities and employers shut down for an extended period of time but the Fall River Police Department never shut down. We continued to

provide our citizens with the fullest and best services we could provide. In fact, our attendance records were the best they had been in several years, which just showed the dedication our police officers displayed during the pandemic. As a result of the shutdown, court proceedings were halted, therefore, officers were not needed to attend the proceedings as they were all postponed. There was a savings as a result of the court closures, which accounts for much of the funds remaining from the FY2020 police department budget. It is now July 2021 and we are in the new fiscal budget and entities are returning to full operation as is the Fall River District and Superior Court. Police Officer attendance at those proceedings will begin and I'm sure at a greater pace than normal just so the court system can catch up with the backlog created from the Covid-19 shutdown.

As the Covid-19 restrictions are eased, our citizens are returning to their jobs, traveling, shopping and simply trying to get their lives back to as normal as possible. With that, the criminal element within our community has not gone away and in fact, as you know, there has been a spike in violent crime in the city of Fall River with the most notable are the recent incidents involving shooting victims and gunfire being exchanged. These incidents are not occurring in rural areas of Fall River, they're occurring in thickly settled residential neighborhoods and parks. On July 10th Mayor Coogan stood with Chief of Police Jeffrey Cardoza pledging to stop the violence in the city and said; "Those who want to make the city more dangerous will not be allowed to run around our city unchecked", "It's time to draw the line in the sand."

If you vote to remove and reallocate funding from the Police Department to any other department other than back to the Police Department, you've allowed the Mayor to back up that "line in the sand" from those violent actors within our city and give them more room to continue their violent acts.

The Police Officers of this city work very effectively with

the low resources and staffing levels but don't let that be deceiving, they are spread very thin performing their duties. In order to combat the violence, police need to be proactive and conduct targeted investigations that require manpower, which can be achieved in various ways but no matter how you want to address the violence, it takes funding to do so.

I ask that you please provide the Fall River Police Department with the ability to provide the much-needed services of crime prevention and control by not defunding the police department but rather vote to reallocate the remaining FY2020 police department funds back into the FY2021 police department budget.

Respectfully,

Michael McConnell, President
Fall River Police Association
Massachusetts Coalition of Police, Local 1854

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