September 25, 2020

For Immediate Release

Tosa Council Demanded Body Cams. Now Chair Person of Ad Hoc Committee is Caught Threatening Police on a Body Cam.

Recently the WPOA called on the City of Wauwatosa Common Council to disband the Ad Hoc Committee to address Policing and Systemic Inequities due to issues surrounding the Chair Person, John Larry. We questioned the deeply concerning behavior of John Larry, and his association with The Peoples Revolution (TPR), whose members were involved in the protests at Officer Mensah’s house on August 8. Another TPR member was involved in the firing of a shotgun that barely missed Officer Mensah. And following the arrests of suspects, Chair Person Larry later appeared at the Wauwatosa police station making demands on behalf of the suspects, and mentioned his position on the Ad Hoc Committee in doing so. Unfortunately the council has not responded to us or to the issues we have brought to their attention.

However, if the council needs additional proof of our concerns, we are thankful that the new body cams can provide some evidence for them.

On August 14, body cam footage captured John Larry—the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee—threatening a Wauwatosa Police lieutenant during a reportedly “peaceful” demonstration for “equity” and the firing of Officer Mensah.

In a news article, Larry confirmed that he was cited, for the August 14th incident, however, Larry claimed he was trying to de-escalate the situation. But the body camera evidence plainly contradicts Larry’s statement. And it clearly reveals the threatening behavior of Larry. Incidentally, Larry has also received numerous other citations for his behavior during protests within Wauwatosa.

---

While the council has yet to respond or address these issues, Alderperson Heather Kuhl, who also serves the Ad Hoc Committee, stated that it would be a “show of hypocrisy” if the Ad Hoc committee was disbanded.²

However, we think there is also a “show of hypocrisy” since Alderperson Kuhl has yet to explain her email to the Police and Fire Commission that demanded the firing of an African-American police officer to repair “the damage of our past.” Although, her lack of explanation may show the need for implicit bias training for certain members of the Wauwatosa Common Council, especially since firing Officer Mensah would only create greater inequity in the police department, which citizens, Tosa Together, and other community groups have spoken out against and are eager to remedy.

And we think there is a “show of hypocrisy” every day that the council continues to ignore our questions—along with the abhorrent behavior of Larry, and the violent behavior of his fellow TPR members.

Therefore, once again, we ask the council to please explain why members of the WPOA should accept guidance from Larry and the Ad Hoc Committee about police matters—when Larry has been cited for threatening a police lieutenant. How are we to reckon his words in light of his threatening actions?

As a professional organization, the WPOA welcomes meaningful discussions on police reform based on facts. But we cannot be expected to cooperate with anyone who claims to advocate police reform - yet threatens police officers and supports bullying officers, council members, or the mayor through protests outside their homes. That said, we welcome the broader implementation of body cameras, and appreciate how body cam footage of the incident involving Larry demonstrates their benefits in showing the true events of police-involved incidents—and the hypocrisy of those who attempt to avoid the truth.

John Milotzky, WPOA President