



## **Joint Statement by Town of Amherst**

Town Manager   Chief of Police   Superintendent of Schools  
Chair of Human Rights Commission  
Amherst Police Supervisors Union   Amherst Police Patrol Officers Union

May 31, 2020

We are haunted by the searing vision of a Minneapolis police officer kneeling on a subdued man's neck, as other officers watched the man die. We witnessed Mr. George Floyd's pleas for help be ignored by the very people who are trained to help and assist. We are haunted, too, by the knowledge that this was not an isolated incident in our country. The number of names and similar experiences is unconscionably long, and an undeniable part of the history of this nation.

First, we extend our collective condolences to Mr. Floyd's family and friends and to all who grieve his death. We offer our thoughts to the countless members of our community who have been personally impacted as well.

Second, we condemn the actions of the police officers involved. The Amherst Town Manager, Police Chief, and School Superintendent have joined with the chair of the Human Rights Commission and the leadership of the Town's two police unions – the Amherst Police Patrol Officers Union and Amherst Police Supervisors Union - to denounce in the strongest possible terms the actions and inactions by these police officers that resulted in Mr. Floyd's death.

Third, we feel compelled to say affirmatively and with real compassion that violence like this is yet another blow to black and brown people—particularly African-American men—who too often are told by our culture that they do not matter. It confirms the lived experience of black men – nationwide and, yes, in our own community. This is a wrong that needs to be righted, and white Americans need to join those who have been carrying this burden, and do the heaviest lifting to right it.

As public officials, this tragedy makes us reflect on our own practices, behavior, and attitudes. We question whether we are doing enough, are we vigilant enough, have we fostered a true culture of respect and honesty? We strive to remain ever thoughtful in our work – as public officials and police officers – to ensure that all members of our community feel part of Amherst and feel protected, listened to, and served by their public servants. We try to do this through training, listening, and learning, and by maintaining an attitude of humility and service.

As public officials, it is our duty to use our legal and moral authority to protect all members of our community no matter their race or color or where they fall on the power spectrum. It is our duty to foster a community free of fear, intimidation and violence – a community in which people are not targeted or hurt unnecessarily by law enforcement – and provide equal protection under the law.

We know we can do better as a country to confront the systemic racism that has brought us to this place of fear and distrust. We can advocate for the criminal justice system to take a firm stand against officers who use excessive force. Those of us who are white can demonstrate that protecting and promoting the rights of black and brown people in our community is integral to securing the well-being of our entire community.

We know many of the young people in our community have seen this video and other similar news, and are trying to process these traumatizing events with their families. However, the current public health situation makes it that much more difficult as they are unable to connect with friends, extended family, or school staff in-person. As such, Amherst Regional Public School counselors and Family Center staff will be available to support students in the coming days and weeks.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, we reaffirm our commitment to the larger goals of social justice and will focus on how we can deliver on the promise of good and fair public safety protection. Police and Town leadership will be meeting with community groups during the week. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions and are prepared to listen. We will work with our community leaders to determine the best ways for us to engage on this important mission as we continue to move forward.

Paul Bockelman  
Town Manager

Scott Livingstone  
Chief of Police

Dr. Michael Morris  
Superintendent of Schools

Matthew Charity  
Chair, Human Rights Commission

Amherst Police Patrol Officers Union

Amherst Police Supervisors Union