



Sunnyvale

News Release

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CITY OF SUNNYVALE ENDORSES CHIEF OF PUBLIC SAFETY'S INITIATIVES AND REFORMS EFFORT

Calls 'No Confidence' Vote by Public Safety Officers Association "Unfounded and Uncalled for"

SUNNYVALE, Calif. – Sunnyvale's City Manager and Mayor today voiced their unequivocal support for the public safety initiatives and reforms sought by Public Safety Chief Phan Ngo, calling a recently conducted 'no confidence' vote by the Public Safety Officers Association "unfounded and uncalled for."

Chief Ngo's public safety improvements, which include transparency, an Internal Affairs Modernization program, increased accountability, discipline process improvements, and strengthening emergency preparedness, were presented to the Sunnyvale City Council during its May 2017 Budget Workshop, and, in particular, the Internal Affairs Modernization program was included in the Council adopted budget for fiscal year 2017/18.

The Internal Affairs improvements have upset the leadership of the Public Safety Officers Association (PSOA), but the initiative enjoys the full support of city leaders, said Kent Steffens, Interim City Manager.

"The integrity and professionalism that Chief Ngo's leadership brings to the Department of Public Safety and to the City of Sunnyvale is important to the modernization and progress of our public safety department," stated Steffens. "The chief's vision and determination will have a long-term impact for the betterment and safety of our officers and our community.

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“We want to point out that we value, appreciate, and respect the many public safety officers who serve this city and put their lives on the line,” Steffens added. “However, we believe the PSOA leadership is being intransigent and resisting essential modernization efforts. This is not in their best interests nor the best interest of public safety officers and the public.”

A PSOA representative recently informed members of the City Council that officers took a vote of “no confidence” in the chief – apparently in reaction to his efforts to increase transparency and relations with residents, and hold all members of the Department to a higher standard of accountability. The representative did not disclose the number of members who participated in the vote or the number who voted for “no confidence.”

Steffens said that Chief Ngo is working to improve the department’s Internal Affairs process, promoting transparency, fairness, and organizational excellence. The term internal affairs refers to a division of a law enforcement agency that investigates allegations, incidents, and possible suspicions of law-breaking and professional misconduct attributed to officers.

In collaboration with Hillard Heintze, a highly regarded police and security consultancy group, Chief Ngo has taken steps to ensure the Department’s internal affairs review process is independent, unbiased, and consistent with modern best practices. The project includes outreach to numerous stakeholders within and outside of the Department, training, and ultimately adoption of a new and reformed Internal Affairs process. The Sunnyvale project is currently scheduled to be completed in 2018.

The chief has sought the involvement of public safety and the public safety officers’ association leadership in the process, which also includes community members and leaders. This collaborative effort is important to continuing to build trust between public safety officers and the community, Steffens added.

Other progressive initiatives by the new chief include an effort to update the city’s 9-1-1 emergency system, which recently suffered a power outage. The city and the chief are working on a solution to ensure backup power is available if the first system is out of service. In addition, the city and the chief are planning a dedicated emergency operations center as part of the Civic Center Modernization Project.

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As part of his new leadership, Chief Ngo has significantly invested in community engagement. He initiated a Youth Leadership Academy that provides junior high school students lessons in ethics, leadership, and communication skills. Ngo is committed to continuing to build trust between public safety officers and the community.

Chief Ngo has a successful career track record and previously led Internal Affairs at the San Jose Police Department. He participated in an Internal Affairs Peer Review of the internal affairs process of 17 major law enforcement agencies throughout the United States. And, from this review, he worked with the City Manager's Office and Police Administration at San Jose in modernizing the San Jose Police Department internal affairs process.

Asked for comment, Chief Ngo called the public safety officers association reported vote an aggressive and unfortunate tactic, but that he would not be deterred from implementing meaningful reform that will benefit department members and the community they serve, and continue Sunnyvale's reputation for innovative public safety service. "I want to stress the Department's members are dedicated, hardworking, and impressive first responders, and I am deeply honored to be leading such a fine group of men and women."

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