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UKIAH ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO APRIL 2021 USE OF FORCE INCIDENT

Ukiah, CA. March 10, 2022. – An independent investigation has been completed, examining the Ukiah Police Department (UPD) response on April 1, 2021 to an individual who was exhibiting erratic behavior in public. During the incident, a number of methods to subdue and restrain the individual were used, and there was community concern whether the actions were consistent with applicable laws, policies, standards, training and best practices.

Independent Investigative Consultants, LLC was engaged by the City of Ukiah to conduct the investigation. They independently investigated how the Ukiah Police Department officers responded to the call for service on April 1, the specific tactics that were used to restrain the suspect, and whether those tactics complied with Department policies. The now-complete investigation has concluded that there is no sustained finding that Ukiah PD actions violated the Department’s use of force policy.

“Regardless of the findings, an incident such as this warrants reflection,” said Police Chief Noble Waidelich. “Even though the Police Department policies, including its use of force policy, are adopted to and do comply with state and federal standards, as a new Chief, I want to make sure that my staff are providing the highest level of service possible to our community. I am committed to ensuring that our officers receive the *best* training, not just the minimum standards. To that end, we are actively partnering with other local agencies with expertise in mental health, disabilities, and substance abuse, as well as obtaining new tools to assist with nonviolent de-escalation.”

Ukiah Police Department is actively engaged in a pilot program in cooperation with Mendocino County that provides for a Mobile Crisis Worker to respond alongside a police officer to calls for service that are likely to have a mental health component. This program is supported by Measure B, which is funding a variety of mental health programs and facilities throughout the County. The Mobile Crisis Response Team is now available 8 am to 6 pm seven days a week, and the County has secured grant funding to increase staffing for this program and to fund costs of infrastructure for its deployment, including vehicles. Additionally, UPD has partnered with the Redwood Coast Regional Center for an upcoming training specifically on officer interactions with people with disabilities.

To ensure that UPD's policies are consistently in proper alignment with state and federal standards, UPD partners with Lexipol, the nation's leading content, policy and training platform for public safety agencies. This helps the Ukiah Police Department remain progressive in delivering the highest levels of public service and adopt community response protocols that are based on national best practices. In 2021 the Ukiah Police Department was recognized by the Lexipol Connect program for achieving Gold level status for consistently and effectively disseminating policies to officers, issuing timely policy updates as laws change, and ensuring officers are trained on policies. Additionally, UPD participates in the state's voluntary POST program, the California Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training. As a participating agency, UPD abides by the Commission's standards and receives expert guidance on implementing state standards, rules, regulations and training.

Chief Waidelich continued, "After considerable reflection, we must focus on how we move forward. I am choosing to take this department in a direction where it is commonplace to see staff lending a helping hand and assisting all of our community. For example, earlier this month, when the Redwood Empire Food Bank was short staffed, UPD stepped in to help. We're attending neighborhood meetings and working daily to provide services that support a higher quality of life for all residents. I am also committed to hiring staff who reflect the makeup of our community, because this is our home, too."

Transparency continues to be a priority as well, and the current UPD policy manual, along with previous versions, is posted online and available anytime for public review. It can be found at www.ukiahpolice.com, under the "About" tab, titled "UPD Policy Manual".



Sage Sangiacomo, City Manager

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