



ABERDEEN POLICE DEPARTMENT

May 3, 2022

Dear Mayor Schave,

After much discussion, thought and prayer with my family and close friends, I have made the very difficult decision to announce my retirement from the Aberdeen Police Department effective June 30, 2022.

It is hard to imagine that my law enforcement career started thirty-three years ago this month when Grays Harbor County Sheriff Dennis Morrisette blessed me with the opportunity to serve as a deputy sheriff. For the next twenty-nine years, I had the absolute privilege to serve the Harbor, where I have lived my entire life, and where my wife and I have raised our children.

In July of 2018, Mayor Erik Larson provided me the honor to serve as the Chief of Police for Aberdeen; it has been a privilege to continue to serve as Chief during your term as Mayor.

My career has been filled with so many exciting opportunities and adventures. Aside from my constant pursuit of public safety, I have also had the pleasure of being involved with many partnerships in public safety. During my tenure at Aberdeen PD, we refocused our efforts on building and strengthening those partnerships.

It has been an absolute joy to work closer with the staff and leadership of our partner agencies, including my good friend Hoquiam Police Chief Jeff Myers, Aberdeen-Hoquiam Fire Chief Tom Hubbard, Cosmopolis Police Chief Casey Stratton, Sheriff Rick Scott, E911 Director Brenda Cantu and all the other countless public and private sector agencies with which we interact with on a regular basis.

During my career on the Harbor, I have had the pleasure of being personally involved with many community-based efforts which have improved public safety and the quality of life for us all, including: our Downtown Aberdeen Association, numerous Neighborhood Block Watch organizations, National Night Out block parties, our committed business owners, regional Police Citizen Academies, our wonderful APD Volunteers In Police Services (VIPS), our dedicated youth in the APD Police Explorer Post, our APD-HPD-CPD Behavioral Health Navigator, the Aberdeen School District, and so many others who are making a difference.

From my first day as Chief, we started to not only celebrate our partnerships and accomplishments, but we also worked to identify ways to improve our department. Over the past four years, we have faced various trials and tribulations, all the while working hard to move the department forward to better serve our community.

In October of 2018, we completed a top-to-bottom assessment from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to evaluate the policies, procedures, and processes of the agency. A total of 114 recommendations for change and improvement were made. Since receiving that report, we have continued to address every one of those recommendations.

As a result of this assessment, and the work of our dedicated administrative team and department members, we anticipate being a state accredited law enforcement agency by the end of this year. The last time Aberdeen PD was accredited was in 2001.

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In addition to meeting or exceeding the state standards as set forth for a professional law enforcement agency, over the last three-years we have also been able to resurrect our citizen volunteer program, hosted joint citizen academies with Hoquiam and Cosmopolis, recreated our patrol and narcotics canine programs, expanded our APD bike unit, completed various facility improvements, increased training, improved on equipment, and solidified internal processes with modern operational policies.

During all of this dedicated work, the department also experienced significant change, including the transition of over twenty department members to retirement or job changes; a massive hiring and training push which is still ongoing now despite ever shrinking pools of candidates; several officer-involved critical incidents; numerous tragic homicide and serious criminal investigations; over two-years of COVID-19 pandemic impacts to staffing, jail bookings and operations; a year of national police reform; social and civil unrest which included local protests; massive legal changes through state "police reform" legislation which has directly impacted our ability to prevent and respond to crime; court and legislative decriminalization of felony drug laws; increased interactions with persons in crisis to include untreated behavioral health issues, chronic substance use, and suicides; a statewide failure to address the flood of ever-increasing property crimes; and a local, state, and national homeless crisis.

Throughout all of this, the members of the Aberdeen Police Department worked hard and continued to serve with dedication and professionalism.

For me personally, I first want to thank my wife of thirty-four years, Mandy, and our son Brad and daughter Mikayla for their support and all the sacrifices they have endured during my career, including missing family events, working nights, holidays, and weekends, plus the never-ending phone calls at all hours. There had been so many occasions when my work interfered with my family, but I know they understood why it was important and I have appreciated their commitment and unconditional support. I love each of them very much, and I plan on making up for it by spending more time in retirement with them, the rest of my family and friends, and of course, with my grandchildren.

I want to thank our citizens and businesses who have endured so much over the past few years. I know as a city we have faced many challenges, but I have appreciated the commitment from you Mayor Schave, as well as my fellow department heads, city employees, and our city council members in their support of public safety and their desire to improve the quality of life for everyone in Aberdeen.

I think we have all learned there are many societal challenges, such as violence, mental health, drug abuse and homelessness, which are beyond the ability of the police department to solve alone. The City needs to continue to work in partnership to address these various challenges.

To all the former and current members of the Aberdeen Police Department, I want to personally share my appreciation for your tireless devotion to our department in serving our city. I have been so blessed to serve alongside each of you as your Chief in this very special APD Family. Please know you will always have my understanding, unwavering support, gratitude, and admiration for what you do each time you report for duty at the Aberdeen Police Department. As I prepare for the next phase of my life, I am confident my fellow department members are well-positioned to continue this important work on behalf of our community.

God Bless you all and stay safe.

Sincerely,



Steven J. Shumate
Chief of Police

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