



June 21, 2016

Disclosure of an Officer's Name in a Police Shooting

As a consistent advocate for transparency, this was a difficult decision for me. In the end, I came to the conclusion that I am not prepared to put our officers' families at risk for an undefined public benefit. However, the public should receive timely, factual information on the incident, including the officer's rank, years of service, and their current status. Read more of my thoughts below.

Thoughts on the Police Ad-Hoc Committee Implementation

I remain concerned that the Board of Supervisors' rush to implement over 200 of the Police Ad-Hoc Committee's recommendations is a major distraction to addressing the critical public safety challenges we have in Fairfax County. The police department had six command staff working full time on the Committee and countless officers addressing the recommendations. My concern is to keep our jurisdiction the safest of its size in the Nation. Read more of my thoughts below.

WMATA's New General Manager and SafeTrack Off to a Good Start

WMATA's new General Manager Paul Wiedefeld is off to a good start. His approach is refreshing. Not only is he tackling the safety issue head on, but he is beginning to take on the deep-seated labor issues at Metro. I hope his efforts continue so we can get WMATA's costs back into line with comparable transit operations. More of my thoughts can be read below.

Reminder: Rolling Road Widening Public Info Meeting Tomorrow

The Public Information Meeting for the project to widen Rolling Road to Four Lanes will be held on **Wednesday, June 22** from **6:30 to 8:30 pm** at **Rolling Valley Elementary School**, 6703 Barnack Drive, West Springfield, VA 22152. [Click here](#) for more information.

Disclosure of an Officer's Name in a Police Shooting

I was the first Supervisor on the Board to argue both privately in the Board's closed session and publicly for the release of Officer Torres's name in the shooting of John Geer. In addition, I have been a consistent advocate for transparency. However, I feel the disclosure of an officer's name in a police shooting before the criminal process is complete unnecessarily puts not only the officer at risk, but their family unnecessarily at risk with no defined benefit to the general public. I support releasing timely, factual information on the incident, including the officer's rank, years of service and their current status. My efforts to keep Fairfax County's current disclosure practices as they exist failed 8 to 2 with Supervisor Kathy Smith supporting my motion.

Below are some of my thoughts on the matter:

- I have yet to receive a good answer as to why the public needs to know the name of the officer.
- There have been some very real threats to our officers and their families due to the release of their names - including an individual with no ties to the case coming into the county to do harm to an officer. See below for a few additional details.
- The public safety resources that are expended to protect the officers and their families are costly -for example, earlier this year, the police had to keep watch on a Fairfax County elementary school because of a potential threat against an officer's spouse employed there.
- There has been a lot of talk about the threat assessment conducted on the safety of the officer and their families, but few actual details. The threat assessment process is little more than contacting other agencies and open source research. Often, the threats against officers are not actionable until the officer's name is released. In many cases, the name release generates the threat.
- Once the officer's name is released, we cannot erase the name from the public's mind, nor can we erase the potential threat to the officer. There is no "undo" button.
- Jurisdictions across the United States vary widely in their disclosure practices and there is no defined standard at the national level.
- The delay in the release of the officer's name in the John Geer shooting was an exception to the normal rules, as the criminal prosecution was indefinitely delayed. We should not be writing rules based on exceptions in extreme circumstances.

The following are just a few examples that have been brought to my attention of the potential impact on the officer and the officer's family. Many of the examples below are based on my conversations with the officers involved and I will relay that their concern for their families is very real. As you would expect, not one of them was concerned for themselves, but they were all concerned for their families.

- The father-in-law of the deceased citizen posted veiled threats against the officer and their family, including knowing where the officer lived and that he was "practicing" at the gun range. The officer lives in a remote area in Virginia where law enforcement is spread thin.
- The purported floorplan to the officer's house was posted online. It ended up being the floorplan to the wrong house - if the person had decided to take action into their own hands, they could have entered the house of an innocent citizen.
- An online post included the officer's son went to a private school.
- An online post included information on the high school the officer's wife attended.
- Perhaps the most disturbing example is that an individual with no direct ties to the case felt compelled to act based on online posts about one of our officers. The individual crossed state lines to take action into their own hands and was perceived as a very real threat. The officer lived with small children and their house had to be put under surveillance.

We live in a very different world. An unknown number of people can read anonymous posts written online that aren't necessarily factual. Who knows when an individual will take it upon themselves based on misguided, incorrect statements online and attempt to harm an officer or their family? That has happened in Fairfax County and there is no reason to expect it would not happen again.

This was a very difficult decision for me, but I am not prepared to put our officers' families at risk for an undefined public benefit. I welcome your thoughts on the matter.

Thoughts on the Police Ad-Hoc Committee Implementation

We are the safest jurisdiction of our size in the Nation. A recent George Mason University study shows high confidence in our police department. Our department had been a leader in Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) and Diversion First before the Ad-Hoc Police Commission. For that, I thank the department.

I am concerned about the imprint of the resources required to review and implement the 200+ recommendations of the Ad-Hoc Police Commission. At today's Board meeting, I reiterated my concern that implementation of 200+ recommendations is a major distraction to addressing the critical public safety challenges we have in Fairfax County including urbanization, the prescription drug and heroin public health crisis, human trafficking, and gangs.

While on the surface, most of the 200+ community recommendations sound great, but many have far reaching implications on our police department. The police department had six command staff and countless officers addressing the recommendations in order to meet a self-imposed December deadline. The Board indicated that there were no fiscal impacts to the police department, which means current police

resources are being pulled from other responsibilities to address these recommendations.

WMATA's New General Manager and SafeTrack Off to a Good Start

As you know, WMATA is currently undertaking its SafeTrack plan to address safety issues and provide a much-needed rehabilitation of its Metrorail system. This is a huge project and will affect all of us, whether we personally utilize the system or not. The first of 15 'surges' WMATA will be acting upon was recently completed with many items [completed ahead of schedule](#).

WMATA's new General Manager Paul Wiedefeld is off to a good start. His approach is refreshing. Not only is he tackling WMATA's safety issue head on, but he is beginning to take on the deep-seated labor issues at Metro. Calling employees together to set expectations is a big first step. While firing approximately 20 of WMATA's managers was unfortunate, it was a necessary next step in setting expectations. I am also glad to see Mr. Wiedefeld leveraging contractors to do this repair work when it is needed. I hope he continues his efforts to address the labor issues, as WMATA costs are way above the average for other large metropolitan transit systems in almost all metrics.

Also, the new, open dialogue between WMATA and the Board of Supervisors is very refreshing and a welcome change for our offices. This action predated the new General Manager, but I am glad to see they are continuing the trend.

Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT) is also assisting our residents while each surge of the SafeTrack plan is underway. It has already supplemented existing transit services to serve additional riders. FCDOT also built a [comprehensive website](#) offering extensive information on alternatives to help mitigate the inconveniences our residents have to face as this repair work is done during each surge.

This all said, I do think the Board of Supervisors needs to determine the cost of the increased workload and services. We also must know who is footing the bill sooner rather than later. At a previous Board meeting, I asked for staff to get back to the Board on these costs and how they would be funded.