Richmond City Manager Makes Final Determination Regarding Disciplinary Actions Against Police Officers In “Celeste Guap” Case

RICHMOND, California. – After reviewing the results of an extensive internal investigation into the conduct of police officers related to an adult teenager formerly identified as Celeste Guap, Richmond City Manager Bill Lindsay has determined that four of the 11 officers identified in the investigation should be terminated from employment with the City of Richmond.

The level of discipline to be imposed is more stringent than that recommended during the initial stages of the review process, which provided that one officer be terminated, one be demoted, two receive suspensions, and five others receive reprimands.

Accordingly, the four officers to be terminated for misconduct have been placed on administrative leave, and the City of Richmond Human Resources Department has initiated related procedures. Of the other officers identified in the investigation, two left City employment for unrelated reasons before the investigation began, and the remaining five are to receive official reprimands.

“The Richmond Police Department’s Office of Professional Accountability conducted an extremely thorough and professional investigation of this matter,” Mr. Lindsay said. “I concur wholeheartedly with the conclusion of Police Chief Allwyn Brown...
that the conduct revealed by this investigation is unacceptable and has no place in a
police department known for its professionalism and dedication to the community. Our
community places its trust in us and expects us to maintain the highest standards of
ethical conduct. Preserving that trust requires that we be decisive in addressing
behavior that violates these standards.”

Under the City’s established personnel procedures, the four officers proposed for
termination may request a hearing regarding the proposed discipline, and may
eventually seek binding arbitration to determine a final outcome.

“I am grateful to Chief Brown and our Police Department for conducting a
comprehensive and rigorous review of this matter,” Mr. Lindsay said. “Their work in
uncovering the facts has been a testament to the department’s professionalism and
willingness to live up the high standards expected of them.”

“I appreciate the decisiveness with which our City Manager has acted to respond
to misconduct by police officers,” said Richmond Mayor Tom Butt. “The professionalism
and integrity of our police department is of utmost importance, and is a point of pride for
our city. These appropriate corrective actions will ensure that Richmond does its part to
address the rash of improper conduct seen in police departments across the Bay Area.”

Background

The Richmond Police Department announced the preliminary recommendations
for discipline on September 23, 2016, following an internal investigation that examined
more than 15,000 text messages, cellular phone records and social media pages, and
included interviews with 45 individuals.

The recommended disciplinary actions called for one officer to be terminated
from employment, one officer to be demoted, two officers to be suspended for up to 120
hours, and five officers to receive letters of reprimand. The City served notices of
disciplinary action to the involved officers, and each of the officers had 10 days from
receipt of the notice to request a private hearing. Only one officer made this request.
The City’s established disciplinary process gives the city manager the responsibility to review the notices of proposed disciplinary action, the hearing officer’s recommendation, and other pertinent information before determining the final level of discipline to be imposed.

In this case, the City Manager’s decision increased the severity of the discipline for the three officers who had been proposed for demotion or suspension, concluding they should also be terminated from employment.

All four officers who have been proposed for termination have now been placed on administrative leave and have been served with a notice of disciplinary action that reflects the decision of the City Manager.

In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding with the Richmond police officers’ associations, all four officers will have fourteen (14) calendar days from receipt of the final notice from the City Manager to grieve the discipline, which may later include a request for binding arbitration.

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