

To: City Manager Adam Politzer  
Cc: Chief John Rohrbacher & Council Members

November 5, 2020

Dear Adam and Chief Rohrbacher,

We hope that this finds you holding up as well as you can amidst everything.

First, we would like to reiterate our thanks for your commitment to including public input into the development of the Body Worn Camera Policy. In your outreach you indicated a 60 day timeline, which is quickly approaching, and we are still waiting for a reply to our request for expert input beyond our own, including the ACLU. We hope time will not run out on this commitment to public input. We look forward to working with our police department and other members of our community on ensuring that the policy is created and implemented in a way that ensures the safety and rights of both officers and those they interact with in the course of their duties.

We are writing to you today as it has come to our attention that a number of SPD patrol vehicles are adorned with "Thin Blue Line" flag stickers. An example of the Thin Blue Line flag image is provided in the photo below, which came from the disturbing November 1st Trump rally in Marin City aimed at voter suppression and intimidation.



While we recognize that for many officers, these flags are used to memorialize those lost in the line of duty, it has been co-opted by White Nationalists and, even in the context of promoting the Blue Lives Matter movement, is seen as a dismissal and denigration of the Black Lives Matter movement and the very real issue of police violence against communities of color that has once again come to the fore this year in the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and too many others. The reality is that for many members of the public, especially people of color, this symbol represents an actively anti-BLM sentiment and serves to create fear/intimidation rather than the sense of inclusion that we know you are dedicated to.

Further, as you are no doubt aware of, promotion of the symbol has caused controversy and difficulties in communities in the area, from the use of masks with the symbol by SFPD to its display in a store window by business owners in San Rafael unaware of the broader context of the symbol. In the San Rafael instance, the store owner, City of San Rafael, & the San Rafael PD were unwittingly drawn into public controversy after people of color expressed the fear that the image provoked.

Outside of the divisive nature of the stickers, it is also in conflict with the US Flag Code and, whether intended or not, is using the imagery of the flag to make a political statement. This misappropriation of one of our nation's most enduring and powerful symbols is not something that our City should be party to.

Beyond the divisiveness and misappropriation, the stickers may also open our City up to public controversy, and potential liability at a time when we can little afford it due to the perceived use of public property for the making of a political statement.

Given the potential this display has to cause disruption to our community - hindering our shared goal of creating a truly inclusive Sausalito and flying in the face of the leadership you have shown, we wanted to make sure you were aware of it and will remove them from SPD vehicles. We would also like to hear from you what your views on the matter are and how we can work together as a community to ensure that all feel welcome regardless of race, religion, etc.

The City has embraced the idea of racial justice, but systemic racism exists and often can show up in small ways, often as unintended consequences of seemingly routine communications. Just this weekend, the Sausalito PD put up notices regarding the gathering at Swede's Beach. In it, it was suggested that the public report "suspicious or criminal activity". While this may be a routine comment to include in a public notice, you may not realize that this phrase is actually coded language for, should there be people of color in the area, please consider them suspicious and criminal. This is the reaction that many people of color had when they saw this notice. Your intent may have been well-meaning but its impact was to cause harm. It is so important that we take the time to pause and reflect when this happens, to understand why what seemed routine can actually mean different things to different cultures and communities. This is where the real work of achieving racial justice can happen.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to continuing our joint efforts to make Sausalito a truly anti-racist community as you bring your time to a close and cement your legacy.

In peace,  
Active Allies of Sausalito Coordinating Committee

Jennifer Conway, Marin City  
Lauren Alexander, Larkspur  
Lisa Bennett, Sausalito  
Melissa Blaustein, Sausalito  
Sam Ruben, Sausalito

With the support of the undersigned:

Stephen Allison, Sausalito  
Rachel Alonso, Sausalito

Mark Anderson, Sausalito  
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Bobbie Casey, Sausalito  
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Christine Durbin, Sausalito  
Licita Fernandez, Sausalito  
Krista Harrison, Sausalito  
Denise Kendall, Sausalito  
Eleanor LaRocca, Sausalito  
Ting Lee, Sausalito  
Allison Levin, Sausalito  
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Nora Sawyer, Sausalito  
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Tawna Farmer, Belvedere Tiburon  
Karen Weil, Berkeley  
Ruth Ann Binder, Fairfax  
Serena Campell, Fairfax

Veronica Geretz, Fairfax  
Sandy Handsher, Fairfax  
Jennifer Stone, Fairfax  
Deborah Toizer, Kentfield  
Steven Wertheimer, Kentfield  
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Gilda Harger, Mill Valley  
Rebekah Helzel, Mill Valley  
Heather Bettini, Novato  
Vicki Gagnebin, Novato  
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Anna Costello, San Rafael  
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Lisa Doering, San Rafael  
Jill Harris, San Rafael  
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