



Town of Arlington Office of the Town Manager

Adam W. Chapdelaine
Town Manager

730 Massachusetts Avenue
Arlington MA 02476-4908
Phone (781) 316-3010
E-mail: achapdelaine@town.arlington.ma.us
Website: www.arlingtonma.gov

Open Letter to the Community

To the Residents of Arlington,

I am writing today to provide the Arlington community with an update on our efforts to restore trust in the Arlington Police Department (APD) in the aftermath of Lt. Richard Pedrini's writings last year and also to provide deeper context and insight into the decision making and processes that led to his return to work this past spring.

As some may recall, this matter started at the close of October 2018, when Lt. Pedrini's writings were published by a media outlet in western Massachusetts. As I read these articles I instantly knew how challenging it would be to address the real harm that his words would cause in the community. His words were both xenophobic and vile. They were also completely inconsistent with what the APD stands for in both policy and practice and his words harmed the APD and its well-earned standing in the community. It is for these reasons that Lt. Pedrini was immediately placed on paid administrative leave while we conducted an investigation into the matter.

While the investigation was underway, I had a number of internal conversations about what our best course of action would be in terms of discipline. Due to the seriousness of the matter, we initially considered several options for addressing it, up to and including termination. However, as our conversations continued, I became more focused on the legal process that needs to be followed in such matters. Part of this process is the right of public sector employees to take disputes about discipline to a third party arbitrator. This arbitrator is empowered, by state law, to overturn discipline issued by the Town. It's this part of the system that started to shift my thinking about the proper response to this issue. After studying various arbitration decisions, I came to the conclusion that there was a significant risk that a termination would not be upheld by a third party arbitrator. This risk, in my opinion, created a path to what I believe would have been the worst case scenario for the Town – a terminated police lieutenant being returned to work by an arbitrator's decision, both vindicated and non-repentant and a community left without an opportunity to heal.

It was concern about this worst case scenario that opened my mind to alternative paths of addressing the issue. The alternative that first came to mind was restorative justice (RJ). We started to give this alternative some consideration and quite quickly, the possibility of pursuing it became feasible. I felt that it provided us with an opportunity to take the issue head on, require Lt. Pedrini to face representatives of the communities that he so seriously harmed with his words and then set us up for a broader dialogue about race and policing with the community as a whole. I also entered this consideration fully acknowledging that this would be a novel use of RJ and we would be breaking new ground.

For those unfamiliar with RJ, here is a basic definition:

"Restorative justice is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in an offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations, in order to heal and put things right as possible."

– Howard Zehr, PhD, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, 2002

So, we decided to pursue RJ as an option, all while holding the traditional disciplinary process in abeyance, but with the option of returning to it should we need to. To start, we sat with Erin Freeborn, the Executive Director of the non-profit Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ) that Arlington and many other communities have worked with for many years. Erin suggested that we conduct a viability meeting with Lt. Pedrini, so that we could determine if he had an understanding of the harm that he caused and had remorse for causing that harm. After that meeting, Erin advised us that he, based on her experience with offenders, was showing the right indicators of remorse. Lt. Pedrini realized that he had caused

widespread harm. He was willing to face people he harmed with his articles and hear how his words impacted them. This allowed us to move to the next step of the process.

Following this, under Erin's guidance, we began the circle process. This circle process is the method in which stakeholders are brought together, harms and needs are identified, and a path to healing is put in place. The first circle consisted of Town officials, which included myself, the Human Resources Director, the Acting Chief of Police, a Patrol Officer from the APD, and an Arlington resident who is a police official in another community. This circle met three times and came to a restorative agreement that outlined the conditions that Lt. Pedrini would need to fulfill. One tenet of this agreement (I'll describe the other tenets a little later) was to conduct a circle with representatives of the communities most acutely harmed by Lt. Pedrini's writings.

Based on this, we worked to organize this second circle and solicit participation from as many stakeholders as possible. Ultimately, nine community members participated along with maintaining the participation of the people who were part of the first circle. Of the nine community members, five were people of color. Through their own personal and professional experiences they represented the refugee/immigrant community, the African American community, the Asian American community, the faith community and people of lower income within our community.

Also, as part of this second circle, we were able to share 114 community impact statements with Lt. Pedrini collected by the Human Rights Commission. Between circle participants and the community statements, Lt. Pedrini was confronted with a broader scope of the harm that he caused. He saw and heard how real the pain was and had to respond in real time to these emotions as they were being expressed. Ultimately, the second circle ended with additions being made to the restorative agreement. Though the specific terms of the restorative agreement are confidential, the major components include:

- A commitment by Lt. Pedrini to write and issue a public apology.
- A commitment by Lt. Pedrini to attend all roll calls of the APD along with Acting Chief Flaherty to describe to all of the women and men of the APD what he had learned from the restorative process.
- A commitment by Lt. Pedrini to engage in further community dialogues in order to advance healing in the community.
- A commitment by Lt. Pedrini to attend trainings with the Chief and community members to further his understanding of the communities that he harmed.
- An administrative assignment for at least 60 days upon his return to work.
- A significant suspension, in accordance with departmental rules and regulations and the Ranking Officers' collective bargaining agreement.

After the close of this second circle, Lt. Pedrini returned to work on April 14, 2019. To be clear, as the appointing authority, this was my decision. There was no vote taken in the RJ circle. However, I used all that I had seen and heard through the circles to make this determination and the determination was not made until the final community circle was complete.

To date, Lt. Pedrini has issued the public apology, spoke at all roll calls, attended trainings (**listed below**) and served his suspension.

- **Implicit Bias** - by Harvard University Professor [Mahzarin Banaje](#), June 2019
- [Changing Perspectives, A Fair and Impartial Policing Approach](#) - July 2019
- [Procedural Justice: Roll Call Training for Law Enforcement](#) - August 2019

He is still serving in an administrative assignment, as the Lieutenant in charge of the Traffic, Details & Licensing Unit. He is also eligible for overtime and details.

The major thing that still needs to be done by both the Town and by Lt. Pedrini is further engagement with the community in order to both continue to repair the harm and rebuild trust in the APD. In order to design that process in a thoughtful, inclusive, yet also timely manner, we have worked this summer with a facilitator from the [Consensus Building Institute](#) (CBI). Through this, we have engaged in a series of discussions with a set of community stakeholders who have either been directly involved in this matter or who have self-identified as having serious concerns about the Lt. Pedrini matter. The group has also included Acting Chief Flaherty, members of the Human Rights Commission, and several of the community participants from the second RJ circle. These stakeholders have met with the CBI facilitator in small groups and the facilitator is now working on a report summarizing perspectives on what is needed that will be delivered to me, and made public, in September in order to guide our next steps.

Beyond that, Acting Chief Flaherty is planning a series of trainings for the entire APD. These offerings are a continuation of the years of training that the APD has conducted focusing on community policing, procedural justice and anti-biased policing strategies. The planned trainings are as follows:

- [Dolan Consulting Group](#)-August 2019, [Improving Public Perception of the Police: Winning Back Your Community](#) (For Command Staff Only)
- [MaeBright Group, LLC](#)- **Training** - August 21-23, 2019 in partnership with the Arlington Rainbow Commission, an interactive training to improve services and climate provided to the LGBTQ+ Community.
- **Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias** - September 2019 Chelsea Police Department.
- **Restorative Justice- Roll Call Trainings** - [C4RJ](#), September 2019
- [Combined Jewish Philanthropies](#) - October 2019, Recognizing Hate: Why Symbols Matter
- **Islam 101**, [Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center](#), Fall/Winter 2019

Acting Chief Flaherty is also working to contract with a third party provider to assess the existence of bias in the APD and provide training recommendations for addressing any findings.

Further, we are engaging with the [National League of Cities and their Race, Equity and Leadership Division \(REAL\)](#) to provide training on issues of race and equity to managers and supervisors across all Town departments. We are also exploring a broader engagement with REAL to facilitate a community-wide dialogue around issues of race in Arlington.

Additionally, we have created a new position in Town government – Coordinator of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The creation of this position was supported by the Select Board and approved by Town Meeting. This position will report to the Director of Health and Human Services and work directly with the Human Rights Commission, Rainbow Commission, and the Disability Commission.

In closing, I want to once again make clear my acknowledgement and understanding of the real harm caused by Lt. Pedrini's words. They have had, and continue to have, real impact on people living in Arlington and beyond. Additional steps are needed, and will surely be coming, to ensure that our Town and all of its employees live up to the values and aspirations of respect, safety, inclusion and justice for all Arlington residents. I understand that we have more work to do and I am committed to doing it. I am committed to the restorative principal that none of us should be defined by our worst act and I appreciate that RJ gave us a tool to try to find a better way forward by fostering engagement based on respect and dignity for all. I look forward to continuing to work with the Arlington community on this matter and I urge Town residents to get involved in the upcoming dialogue so we can truly find a path to healing.

Sincerely,

Adam W. Chapdelaine

Town Manager, Arlington, MA