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Everett Massachusetts Newspaper



NEWS

## DeMaria Declares Racism a Public Health Crisis

by [Independent Staff](#) • June 17, 2020 • [0 Comments](#)

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On Tuesday, Mayor Carlo DeMaria

made a declaration officially declaring racism a public health crisis in Everett – ensuring that racism and discrimination both remain intolerable.



Mayor Carlo DeMaria declared racism a public health crisis in Everett, bringing in several immediate police reforms within the City's Police

Department as the Administration  
continues to look at all facets of bias.

That was bolstered by the announcement of a review of policies and practices at the Everett Police Department, and a list of action items that have been initiated immediately – including barring chokeholds, continuing more diverse hiring, and creating regional reforms to the Internal Affairs departments in area law enforcement departments.

“The City of Everett is culturally rich and abundantly diverse,” he said. “Racism or discrimination, in any form, will not be accepted nor tolerated. It is with this in mind that I find it imperative to declare racism a public health crisis in the City of Everett.”

Following President Barack Obama’s call to mayors to pursue policing reforms, Mayor DeMaria signed the Mayor’s Pledge issued by the Obama Foundation’s My Brother’s Keeper Alliance. The “Mayor’s Pledge” commits the City of Everett to the following:

- Review police use of force policies;
- Engage communities by including a diverse range of input, experiences, and stories;
- Report review findings to the community and seek feedback; and
- Reform police use of force policies.

The City of Everett Police Department’s policies and procedures strictly mirror and adhere to the guidelines set forth by the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission (MPAC). The MPAC is an organization responsible for the development, delivery, and enforcement of training standards of municipal police departments throughout Massachusetts.

The recommended use of force policies set forth by the “8 Can’t Wait” campaign has resulted in a cursory review of current policies to ensure that nothing was overlooked, said the mayor.

The following action items have been taken as of this week, he said.

- Updated Use of Force and De-escalation Policies

The City of Everett Police Department is actively updating the use of force and de-escalation policies, as well as the rules and regulations with a duty to intervene clause.

“As a result of our initial review of the current Everett Police Department policies, our Department will soon be equipped with a policy surrounding Biased Based Policing,” he said. “For years, the Everett Police Department has been trained to never initiate any police involvement with another person on the sole basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, or physical ability. Although it exists as a past-practice, such training has never been codified into a policy until now. This policy will be published and implemented within the next 10 days.”

- Chokeholds Barred for Subduing People

Police utilization of chokeholds, strangleholds, or other tactics in which an officer cuts off the oxygen supply of another person in order to subdue them has, rightfully, become a main focus in the national spotlight as it pertains to police departments' use of force policies. Chokeholds have never and will never be a method of restraint taught to the Everett Police Department, the mayor said.

In fact, chokehold training is explicitly barred in the State of Massachusetts, citing the inherent dangers which accompany that tactic.

"This is further reiterated to our Police force that, barring a situation in which an officer's life is in imminent danger and deadly force has thus been authorized, a chokehold shall never be utilized on a person as a means to subdue them," said the mayor.

#### •Mayor Calls for Regional Internal Affairs Reform

The Internal Affairs division of a Police Department refers to the enforcement arm within the department that investigates incidents and possible suspicions of law-breaking and professional misconduct attributed to officers on the force. This has been highly scrutinized based on current events.

Mayor DeMaria said on Tuesday he is seeking to form a Regional Internal Affairs Coalition to increase the transparency of police misconduct and the processes by which they are investigated. Mayor DeMaria said he will be calling upon local leaders to join him in forming this coalition to increase the impartiality of all Internal Affairs investigations. Additionally, the Everett Police Department have taken their own proactive measures in monitoring their internal affairs investigations. They are one of the few departments in Massachusetts that utilize the leading professional standards software, IA Pro and Blue Team, used by approximately 800 public safety agencies in five countries. The IA Pro and Blue Team software acts as an early warning system, helps frontline supervisory documentation, case management of internal affairs investigations, and overall organizational accountability.

"As the needs of society change, it is the responsibility of local leaders to implement changes," said Mayor DeMaria. "My Administration will not be defunding our police department; rather, we will be re-equipping the force by adding more tools to their duty belts."

#### •Renewed Commitment to Community Policing

One of the greatest tools that a police department can use is their ability to use community policing to interact with residents and businesses alike, the mayor said. As part of their ongoing efforts in community policing, the City pointed to the fact that the Everett Police Department has engaged numerous organizations over the years in an effort to better serve their residents. These relationships, they said, have allowed the department to gain the trust of all Everett residents from the youth to the elderly population, and resulted in the creation of the Cops Corner at Everett High, the Junior Police Academy, and the 25 Days of Christmas tradition.

"The men and women of the Everett Police Department take their responsibilities seriously," said Chief Steven Mazzie. "We have always valued our relationships with our residents and strive to provide our services in a fair and impartial way. Over the years we have found that transparency, communication, and mutual respect have helped de-escalate volatile situations and often led to positive outcomes.

We acknowledge that now is an important time to reinforce our dedication to getting the job done right while protecting those we serve and building a lasting trust,” he continued.

- Commitment to Diverse Hiring

It will remain the goal of the Everett Police Department, as it has been in over the past 10 years, the Chief said, to continue to hire police officers who are visually and culturally reflective of the community and its residents. The last class of police officers hired were predominantly of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities, speaking multiple languages. The Everett Police Department will continue to strive to recruit people of color so as to best represent our diverse community, said the Chief.

- More City Funding for Mental Health

The City has committed to adding the necessary personnel to support police officers in the City of Everett. Mayor DeMaria said he will be reallocating Everett Police Department funds to hire mental health professionals, therapists, and additional personnel who will provide access to services needed by the City. This will be done in partnership and conjunction with local nonprofits and mental health providers. This collaboration will allow for a heightened ability of the Everett Police Department to achieve preventative results, rather than to respond with reactive measures.

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