

Published June 24th, 2020

Moraga Police Chief updates council on departmental procedures

By Vera Kochan



Moraga Police Department Photo Vera Kochan

Moraga Police Chief Jon King expressed his disgust in the actions leading to the death of George Floyd during his June 10 town council presentation, and assured council members that his department has facilitated conversations with staff regarding current events. It also continues to develop a diverse workforce that is training in crises intervention, de-escalation and implicit bias.

What King wants his department to be doing right now is listening and hearing the community. "As we know, listening is perhaps the most overlooked portion of communication," he said.

King stated that the entire Moraga Police Department Policy Manual is posted online and that MPD uses Lexipol, the nation's leading provider of public safety policy and training solutions.

King also explained whether or not MPD uses eight policies recommended for use in police agencies by Campaign Zero, an American police reform campaign linked with the Black Lives Matter movement (www.8cantwait.org).

Restraint chokeholds/strangleholds have never been authorized within MPD. However, the carotid control hold, which stops the flow of oxygenated blood to the brain rather than stopping the flow of air to the lungs, has been used. King suspended its use in early June.

With regards to a de-escalation requirement, MPD officers can only use that amount of force that reasonably appears necessary. Officers are required to give a verbal warning and must make efforts to identify themselves prior to use of force.

The policy of requiring officers to exhaust all other reasonable alternatives before using deadly force is not always possible, according to King. MPD's officers are trained to go to the most appropriate level of force for any particular situation. It is based on the totality of circumstances and reasonable officer standards.

The requirement of officers to intervene in order to prevent the use of unreasonable force by another officer is expected in the MPD.

Officers can shoot at a moving vehicle in Moraga "when an officer reasonably believes there are no other reasonable means available to avert the threat of the vehicle."

The Use-of-Force Continuum is outdated in that it implies that officers must use a lower level force option before using higher level ones. MPD officers are allowed to choose the appropriate level of force given the situation.

To require comprehensive reporting is a staple within MPD which requires internal reporting and notification for any use-of-force incidents.

"There's more communication going on right now with California police chiefs about best practices," stated King. He asks his officers to have respect for everyone, "I think that's how we have to do our jobs."

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