

June 9, 2015



Members of the Berkeley Community:

The Berkeley Police Department undertook and completed an extensive review of its response to significant civil unrest and violent protest which occurred in Berkeley on December 6 and 7, 2014. The report can be found at <http://www.cityofberkeley.info/police/BPDPostIncidentReview>.

It was immediately clear to the Department that the events of December 2014, which had not been experienced in Berkeley for decades, represented opportunities for our organization to learn and grow. The Department has a long history of community engagement and involvement. The Berkeley community has extremely high expectations of its police department; our expectations for ourselves are equally high. BPD, the community and Council expressed an intense interest in understanding what had occurred, and for the Department to communicate accurate and complete information recounting the circumstances and decisions made.

Though December 6th and 7th were the first of several days of protests, it was the actions and interactions between the crowd and the police department on those two nights that drew the most attention of the community. Through the course of events, members of the department constantly applied lessons learned to their next operational period, refining their planning and their response in the field. Subsequent protests had far fewer police-crowd interactions in Berkeley, reflecting different strategies by both police and protesters. Protecting free speech, facilitating safe and peaceful protest, ensuring the safety for all involved while simultaneously identifying and arresting violent protesters is a complicated and challenging task.

I appointed a working group to review the events of December 6th and 7th and to prepare an accurate, detailed, professional and candid assessment of the Department's response. As part of this review I directed the team to reach outside the department and speak with community members, faith and student leaders, civil rights groups, business members, members of the media and outside experts.

This report is intended to present accurate information in context to allow for informed, constructive dialogue. While the absence of violence or conflict cannot be guaranteed, these conversations should focus on how to minimize the likelihood of conflict with peaceful, nonviolent protesters, while working towards effectively identifying and arresting those committing violence and acts of destruction. This review recognizes good work but also candidly identifies numerous opportunities for the Department to improve. There may be areas we may have missed, or ideas we have not considered. The Department is open to those discussions.

I want to thank the members of the Berkeley Police Department who researched and wrote this review and built the corresponding website: Lt. Dave Frankel, Sgt. Dan Montgomery, Officer Ryan Andersen and Officer Darrin Rafferty. These employees committed themselves to this project with the support of personnel throughout the organization. They have my gratitude.

Ultimately, it is my responsibility as the Chief, working with the support of our Command staff, to ensure our employees operate under policies and procedures that are designed to accomplish a clear mission, and to ensure the greatest possible level of safety is achieved, while respecting and protecting the rights of all involved. I am proud of the Berkeley Police Department and its dedication to learning and growing. This accurate and critical self-assessment is a hallmark of the best organizations and is in keeping with the best traditions of the Berkeley Police Department.

Michael K. Meehan
Chief of Police