



Fwd: Comment about Cpl Wise, Spitter Arrest 7/10

1 message

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From: Alan Ehrlich [REDACTED]
Date: Wed, Jul 15, 2020, 4:21 AM
Subject: Comment about Cpl Wise, Spitter Arrest 7/10
To: Chief Joe Ortiz, SPPD <jortiz@southpasadenaca.gov>, Brian Solinsky SPPD <bsolinsky@southpasadenaca.gov>
Cc: Rick Schneider [REDACTED]

Joe, Brian,

I was present during the arrest of the 'spitter' suspect on the 1400 block of Lyndon July 10. I live a block away on the 1200 block of Lyndon and arrived after officers were on the scene, had the suspect in custody, and before the suspect was handcuffed. I have seen one of the videos posted by a bystander, a second posted by London Lang and seen the written report. Because I know I can be candid with you, I am disturbed by a number of comments made by Cpl Wise at the time of the arrest, actions taken (or not taken) by officers present, and representations made in the written report.

I've known Cpl Wise for over 10 years and always considered him to be a good officer. I also know and understand how arrests can be stressful experiences (usually for the person being cuffed) and would assume procedures for arresting suspects are SOP in any police training program.

In the video, Officer Wise indicates there is a mob of people and he feels threatened for his and the other officer's safety. There were 3 separate groups of bystanders. One group of residents, perhaps 5 or 6 ppl, approx 150' to the west, in front of their property, near the corner of Lyndon/Fremont. The second group was approx 150' or more to the east, also about 4 - 5 ppl, also in front of their residence. Neither group was interfering with the arresting officers, but were looky-loos, who typically come out when they see the flashing lights of a police car or fire engine to see what is happening. The third group was 4 ppl, none closer than 25' (probably more) from where the suspect was sitting on the curb during the arrest. One of the four was myself, who was actively keeping and pushing Fahren James, London Lang and the camera/bystander back so the officers could complete the arrest.

I've expressed my concerns about our officers' safety, especially during COVID, to both of you. A report had taken 2 days earlier that the suspect had assaulted and spit on one of the victims, but at no time did any of the officers attempt to put the facemask the suspect had around his neck over his mouth, much less utilize the spit hood to protect themselves, not even when the suspect was being put into the police vehicle. Throughout the arrest, while SPPD officers were wearing their PPE, they each were within 3' or less of the suspect's mouth which was not covered. Even if the suspect did not spit on the officers, they were close enough that any aerosols could have contacted their face or clothing. The suspect was not sitting quietly, so in this instance any aerosols would have traveled more than 6'. As a precaution, for the safety of the entire department may I suggest that all of the officers involved in the arrest receive COVID testing and be monitored for any signs of possible infection until the 14 day incubation period has passed.

After the suspect was in the police vehicle, there is more video of an exchange between Cpl Wise and London Lang where Wise says "you guys caused this. . . . this is wrong the cop hating around here . . . why bring this to our city?" Wise defends his actions by saying the suspect "could have had a gun or knife, he assaulted your sister, her could have assaulted me too." Ignoring the size difference between the suspect and Wise, or any of the other 3 officers on scene, if I take Wise at his word, the implication is that none of the four officers

searched the suspect for weapons at any time during the arrest until Wise checked the suspect's pockets and discovered the rock. Between the two men, it is Lang who sounds calm and composed and Wise who appears to be agitated. Lang is not trained in de-escalation techniques, Wise is.

As much as I am aware, Lang and SPY4PR have conducted themselves peacefully and worked with SPPD, city officials and local businesses since they began protesting for police reform at the corner of Fair Oaks and Mission. Some of their signs read 'Equal Justice,' and 'More Love, Less Hate.' After the rally in front of city hall, the candlelight rally in Garfield Park and July 4th march, they have had been nothing less than complimentary in the media and on-line about SPPD. Their movement is part of the national discussion about policing and social justice across the US. Other than the fact that SPY4PR members are South Pas residents, so their focus is on our city, they have not been targeting or labeling SPPD the same as protesters in Atlanta, Minneapolis, Buffalo or Ferguson, so for me to hear Wise make those statements is disconcerting. I don't think Wise was caught off guard, I think he was being emotional and expressing exactly how he feels. This is the systemic part of the national conversation where people of color are saying white people haven't been listening, which brings me back to the written report. The term 'BLM protesters' appears throughout the report in what some might consider to be perjorative. Also, Wise indicates in his report that he checked Ms. Lang's leg for any injury caused by a rock being thrown and did not observe anything. I was standing next to Ms. Lang when Officer Valdez came over to ask Lang to sign the citizen's complaint and it did not appear to me that Valdez (not Wise) made any effort to examine Lang's leg more closely, by either stooping down or using her flashlight given the time of day. I am not an officer nor have LE training, but I would have assumed that in an assault case, photo evidence of wounds would have been part of the evidence file provided to the detectives and DA.

Separate from my witness observation, as a personal observation, if this had been a rape incident, I would have assumed that one of the four responding officers, most commonly a female officer, would have gone over to comfort and get a statement from the victim while the other officers were engaged with the suspect. Other than Wise 'sparring' with James and Lang, from 25' as seen on the video, none of the officers came to speak with the victim and help explain the process that was happening or help to de-escalate the situation.

If I can ask you to remove your SPPD hats for a moment and step back as neutral observers, in the context of the national conversation over social justice and police reform, can you see how Bartl and Philips not wearing PPE during the recent city hall rally, the arrest of the black assault suspect 2 weeks ago (against a white man) and the arrest of a white assault suspect (against a black woman) might appear to be unequal treatment to both the suspects and the victims?

I have cc'd Dr. Schneider as he is both the PSC council liaison and member of the council's police reform sub-committee which will begin holding public meetings later this week

As always, Stay Safe, Stay Healthy,
- Alan