

October 2, 2020

Sent via email

Mayor Robert Joe, District 1, rjoe@southpasadenaca.gov

Mayor Pro Tem Diana Mahmud, District 5, dmahmud@southpasadenaca.gov

Councilmember Michael Cacciotti, District 4, mcacciotti@southpasadenaca.gov

Councilmember Stephen Rossi, District 2, mcacciotti@southpasadenaca.gov

Councilmember Richard Schneider, District 3, Rdschneider0@yahoo.com

Dear Mayor Joe and Councilmembers:

We submit this letter of concern as organizations representing residents of South Pasadena and organizations advocating for the civil rights of our communities. We demand a formal investigation from the City Council into the recent decision of the Chief of Police to approve and promote a public event led by a local chapter of the American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property, scheduled to be held at the South Pasadena Police Department station on Saturday, September 26, at 10:00 am. This letter also serves as a personnel complaint against Chief Ortiz submitted under Section 320.2.2. of the [South Pasadena Police Department Policies and Procedures Manual](#).

Chief Joe Ortiz sent an email, with the subject line, "Invitation to all," to undisclosed recipients on September 24, 2020, at around 2:55 pm. Chief Ortiz described the event as "an excellent opportunity to meet with some of our community members who want to show their support and publicly recognize all first responders and the excellent work we do." Chief Ortiz noted that, "please know that our uniformed personnel are not in attendance to endorse, support, oppose or contradict any political campaign, initiative, social issue, cause, or religion. ***Please refrain from using photos of our personnel as we welcome the community's, spiritual support.***"

That evening, at around 5:58 pm, Chief Ortiz sent an email to several city email inboxes and individuals informing them that the event "has been postponed until further notice."

The next day, the City Manager's office issued a statement from Chief Ortiz apologizing for his actions. Chief Ortiz stated: "My error in judgment was the result of good intentions, albeit with poor execution. I deeply regret that my lack of due diligence in this matter has caused confusion and doubt about the many great qualities of our community that make it so special."

Chief Ortiz's invitation of a group espousing racism, bigotry and xenophobia to gather on city property is a breach of our trust and confidence. At a minimum, the City Council must investigate this incident. The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property (TFP) is a religiously-affiliated organization that promotes hate ideology, speech, and actions. On their website, TFP has a page dedicated to "Pray for Your Police Department." On that same page, TFP suggests the disproportionate number of Black lives killed during police encounters is justified.¹ The TFP website contains numerous

¹ Pray for Your Police Department—No Police, No Peace, <https://www.tfp.org/prayersforpolice/petition/pledge-rosary/> ("The leftist narrative seen in the media is that the police are unjust and persecuting minorities. However, almost 100% of the investigations exonerate the police that the media condemns without a thorough investigation or ruling.").

articles denouncing Black Lives Matter protests,² the movement for racial justice,³ and public health measures taken during this COVID-19 pandemic.⁴ TFP's articles call the coronavirus "the Chinese virus."⁵ They characterize community-based organizations and leaders "mythical" and indigenous communities and communities of color as "not exist[ing] as unified social units."⁶ The Southern Poverty Law Center describes TFP as a "virulently anti-LGBT group."⁷

Chief Ortiz's claim that he was unaware of the hateful views TFP prominently displays on its website defies credulity. What kind of diligence Chief Ortiz did exercise in sanctioning the TFP event? If Chief Ortiz did not know that TFP promotes positions at odds with South Pasadena's inclusive values, why did he caution attendees not to take photos of officers and staff taking part in the prayer? What misuse of public funds, public property, and email systems occurred? Do these actions amount to violations of the department's own policies and state laws? Is this misconduct subject to discipline?

Chief Ortiz's invitation to host TFP at the police department must be examined in context. Since May of this year, South Pasadena Youth for Police Reform and Black Lives Matter South Pasadena have been demonstrating on our streets calling for police reform and justice for the Black lives lost to police brutality. The Anti-Racism Committee of South Pasadena held a listening session with the police department and the City Council to share their personal experiences of biased and unequal treatment by police officers. Care First South Pasadena has called for our city leaders to critically examine the police budget. These public demands for police reform are occurring front and center in our city and in cities throughout our country. While our views may differ on the specifics of police reform, we share one vision: a community that respects the dignity and safety of all people. And when we dissent, we do so respectfully—not with hate.

Chief Ortiz's decision to align the police department with TFP has harmed our community. As such, the City Council must act swiftly to investigate this incident. We request that this incident be discussed as an agenda item at the next City Council meeting on **October 7 or at a special meeting called by the council**. Should there be costs to complete an investigation, Councilmembers may consider using their discretionary district funds to supplement some of these costs.

This City Council passed [Resolution 7673](#) in August 2020 affirming the city's commitment to safeguarding the civil rights, safety, and dignity of all our residents and to *proactively* ensure our rights and privileges. The city has pledged to not tolerate any acts of discrimination motivated by hatred toward any group based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The City Council should act on this resolution and uphold the policies and laws that govern our city. For

² John Horvatt II. *Why the Black Lives Matter Is Wrong and Will Promote a Revolution to Destroy America*, Aug. 11, 2020, <https://www.tfp.org/why-the-black-lives-matter-is-wrong-and-will-promote-a-revolution-to-destroy-america/>.

³ John Horvat II. *The Riots: Why Do None Dare Call Them Evil?* Sept. 25, 2020, <https://www.tfp.org/the-riots-why-do-none-dare-call-them-evil/>.

⁴ John Horvat II. *19 Leftist Contradictions About the Coronavirus Crisis*, May 11, 2020, <https://www.tfp.org/19-leftist-contradictions-about-the-coronavirus-crisis/>.

⁵ Michael Whitcraft. *Communion on the Tongue: Corona-hysteria's Tragic Victim*, Sept. 1, 2020, <https://www.tfp.org/communion-on-the-tongue-corona-hysterias-tragic-victim/>.

⁶ John Horvat II. *Leftists Propose Socialist Communities to Replace Police*, Aug. 20, 2020, <https://www.tfp.org/leftists-propose-socialist-communities-to-replace-police/>.

⁷ <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2013/03/26/national-organization-marriage-has-rough-start-2013>;
<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2011/10/07/extremists-many-stripes-gather-values-voter-summit-2011>

these reasons, we call on the City Council to investigate this matter fully, with transparency, and with a complete report back to the public.

Sincerely,

Care First South Pasadena
South Pasadena Tenants Union
South Pasadena Youth for Police Reform
[list in development]

Cc: South Pasadena Public Safety Commission
Dr. Sandra Thomas, Commissioner, 5th Supervisorial District,
Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations