



CITY OF WEIRTON

200 MUNICIPAL PLAZA
WEIRTON, WEST VIRGINIA 26062

September 13, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

On Sunday, September 11, 2016, a factually inaccurate news story was run in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette which contained multiple incorrect and untrue statements. We find that, every once in a while, news agencies get ahead of themselves, but that is no excuse for this newspaper running with uncorroborated statements. The City of Weirton did not participate in that story due to the personnel matters it was touching. We take our responsibility with employee personnel files seriously and regret that a former employee has taken advantage of that by telling a one-sided, factually inaccurate story. The former officer detailed in the article was terminated for conduct unbecoming an officer in response to a series of incidents, such as:

- Based on the facts related to the officer-involved shooting on May 6, 2016, it was concluded that the former officer was not de-escalating the situation but rather escalating it through his use of profanity before any weapon was drawn. The investigation further revealed that the officer froze on the scene, not communicating with the other officers involved.
- Ruling a death to be natural causes when, in fact, the scene showed it to be a homicide investigation. Subsequently the medical examiner's office ruled that the cause of death was blunt force trauma to the head, neck, and torso region. Because of his actions, evidence was moved from its original location, thereby, contaminating the potential crime scene.
- Searching a vehicle without probable cause or a search warrant. This led to a man being arrested for disorderly conduct for cursing. Those charges were subsequently dropped as the investigation revealed that the officer acted in an inappropriate manner by cursing at the subject's wife as well as conducting an illegal search.

As stated earlier, the officer was terminated for conduct unbecoming an officer and not for the reasons the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette claims. The former officer, as the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette may not know, is afforded multiple rights of appeal that would involve any disciplinary action and would not fall under the State's "at-will" status afforded to other non-civil service employees. Further information in the article was also factually inaccurate related to the officer-involved shooting that

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occurred on May 6, 2016, which occurred after the incidents described above. Those incorrect statements are detailed below:

- The article stated that “one of them shot Mr. Williams in the back of the head just behind his right ear.” This statement is false as the medical examiner’s report and details from a press conference with the County Prosecutor indicated the bullet entered the right temporal lobe.
- The article stated that “Why the Chief told reporters, and Mr. Williams’s family in a private meeting with them a week later, that all three officers were back to work is not known.” This statement is also false. The Police Chief has never met the Williams family as the investigation is being handled by an outside agency.

We take our commitment to the community seriously and will do everything possible to maintain a workforce that acts appropriately with its citizens. We will not allow the community to be put at risk from any employee who shows careless disregard to their duties with the community. The City continues to remain committed towards delivering the first-class services provided by our Police Department who protect the community each and every day.