

Undersigned Clergy

December 5, 2018

Dear Chief Lalley, City Manager Kozal, Mayor Kaptain, and City Council Members,

The shooting this past spring of Decynthia Clements by Lieutenant Chris Jensen has raised a number of issues and feelings for the Elgin community. In a spirit of cooperation and with a desire to maintain a strong and unified Elgin, the undersigned clergy wish to share the following thoughts regarding why there is a strong consensus that bringing Lieutenant Jensen back to active duty in Elgin would be a detrimental action and we advise against it.

Here is a brief summary of the range of thinking by clergy who hold that Lieutenant Jensen should not return to active duty in Elgin.

On one end of the spectrum are those who find the shooting to be one more example of completely inappropriate police action toward an African-American person. These people believe that the act was unethical and would likely favor criminal prosecution of Lieutenant Jensen. People holding this position would often favor Lieutenant Jensen ceasing to serve as a police officer in any capacity, not just in Elgin.

A second position is held by those who believe that it is either unclear or unlikely that Lieutenant Jensen will be charged with a crime in the shooting. But people holding this second position do believe that the actions showed poor judgment with some considering it simply reckless. While people holding this position may not think, under current laws, the action was criminal, they do believe it was a sign of reckless activity and shows clear evidence of someone who should not be given the opportunity to be in a similar situation again, especially in Elgin.

A third position is that Lieutenant Jensen may have been justified legally in this situation, but it was clear from the audio on the tape that the officers involved had a clear plan of action. However, as soon as Ms. Clements left the vehicle, Lieutenant Jensen, who was the senior officer on the scene, was the one who almost immediately deviated from the agreed plan over which he was in charge. Why was he so quick to shoot when the plan involved Tasers and rubber bullets before shooting live ammunition? This group believes that, legality aside, this was a complete violation of clearly articulated protocol at the scene.

A final variation on positions comes from those who say that regardless of how justifiable the outcome is judged to be, putting Lieutenant Jensen back on the streets in Elgin would be inflammatory and cause risk to him, to other officers, and to residents in the process. His return would simply be unwise in light of what is best for the community.

Therefore, while there is a diversity of opinions covering the range listed above, among clergy of various traditions, many of us agree with at least one of the above four positions. It is therefore held by the undersigned clergy that for ethical, moral, and wisdom informed reasons that Lieutenant Jensen should not return to active duty in Elgin at any time in the future.

We share this out of a moral obligation as clergy to address this from both a justice perspective and from the basic desire to maintain a unified, peaceful, and safe Elgin. We hope that advances in training and new ways of dealing with people with addiction and mental health issues will be one result of this tragedy. We greatly appreciate the department's recent efforts to address mental health and crisis intervention. We also hope that in addition to the above concerns, that the independent investigation into the department's processes also offer insights that make procedures better and incidents like this even less likely to happen in the future.

Finally, we share this out of our shared commitment to the Elgin community and a desire to continue to be in a good relationship with leaders on the city council, in the city manager's office, and within the Elgin Police Department in the future. We desire a community that is unified, safe and healthy for all residents and a spirit of community that makes Elgin a strong city for years to come.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Edmond  
Rev. Willie Tate  
Rev. Dave Daubert  
Deacon Marlene Daubert  
Rev. Mark Weinert  
Pastor George Holmes  
Rev. John Halbert  
Rev. Carol Book  
Rev. Karen Schlack  
Rev. Katie Shaw Thompson  
Rev. Richard T. Carlson  
Rabbi Jonathan Israel Kohn  
Rev Lois Bucher  
Rev. Michael H. Montgomery, Ph.D.  
Rev. Jeff Mikyska  
George Wadleigh  
Rev. Andre Allen  
Apostle Larry & Prophet Tiffany Henderson

Cc: Elena Ferrarin, Daily Herald