

070720-10

agenda item 10

Lisa C. Kunz

From: Lisa C. Kunz
Sent: Tuesday, July 7, 2020 8:16 AM
To: 'Cory & Jenny Reeves'
Subject: RE: My Message

Good Morning Cory & Jenny – your comments will be shared with the Commission and appropriate staff for consideration prior to this evening’s meeting.

Thank you.

Lisa Kunz

City Clerk/Records Manager
City of Great Falls
P.O. Box 5021
Great Falls, MT 59403
406.455.8451

From: Cory & Jenny Reeves <creeves1@bresnan.net>
Sent: Monday, July 6, 2020 8:07 PM
To: Bob Kelly <bkelly@greatfallsmt.net>; Mary Sheehy Moe <msheehymoe@greatfallsmt.net>; Tracy Houck <thouck@greatfallsmt.net>; Owen Robinson <orobinson@greatfallsmt.net>; Rick Tryon <rtryon@greatfallsmt.net>
Cc: Lisa C. Kunz <lkunz@greatfallsmt.net>
Subject: My Message

Mayor Kelly and Respective City Commissioners,

My name is Cory Reeves; I am a proud retiree of the Great Falls Police Department and now serve Cascade County as your Undersheriff. In the last ten years of my service with the GFPD, I had the pleasure of serving as a School Resource Officer, specifically at GFHS and Paris Education Center. Without a doubt, I will forever cherish the relationships I built with students and staff alike. I'm genuinely saddened by what I've read is occurring in Helena; their leaders must have no idea or understanding of what an SRO program is and the immeasurable benefits it provides. If they did, the last thing they would be cutting is their SRO program.

I know during my ten years as an SRO, our community, to include city officials, fully supported the SRO program. I sincerely hope that trend continues on July 7th and that each of you recognizes what an amazing SRO program we have here in Great Falls. The GFPD SRO program is something to be emulated and I can assure you, it is. While in the position, I took innumerable phone calls from other agencies asking for guidance on how to emulate our SRO program.

Your SRO's are dedicated to keeping youth out of the criminal justice system; writing tickets is an absolute last resort. The bulk of an SRO's time is spent defusing situations and informally counseling students through perceived crises. I can't tell you how many times a student is irate about something and a teacher and/or

associate principal tries with no avail to calm the situation. However, once they request assistance from the SRO, the situation is often defused without further incident. This is because of the unique relationship built between students and SRO's. Most youth still respect law enforcement and that's in large part because of those relationships built in the schools via the SRO program. SRO's love being role models, bridging that gap between youth and law enforcement.

SRO's wear many, many hats, and the officers that apply for these positions do so because they believe in the power of building a solid relationship between youth and law enforcement. Aside from the immeasurable personal connections SRO's build each day within the school setting, they also provide protection. I don't need to remind anyone that schools are considered "soft targets" and SRO's are on the frontlines to defend against an active shooter. Patrol Officers will be there in about three minutes, but SRO's are there in a matter of seconds as they are already on school grounds. You can't put a price on that because as every school shooting has shown, seconds are lives.

I encourage this City Commission to renew the Great Falls Public Schools and Great Falls Police Department SRO Agreement for the upcoming school year and for many more school years to come. This partnership is one that to this day I greatly miss; that's how strong and mission-driven the GFPS/GFPD SRO program is. Both entities get it and I hope each of you, as Great Falls City Commissioners, do as well. I would love to be at the meeting and giving this statement of support in person but I leave early in the morning to take part in a search for a drowning victim. Take care and thank you for your service to our City.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cory Reeves