



Village of Put-in-Bay

Mayor Jessica C. Dress

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First and foremost, I am deeply saddened by the events that transpired within the village of Put-in-Bay during the evening of Saturday, June 6.

These are terribly trying times.

Officers of the village police department initiated a traffic stop that evening, which has now since made headlines, for unsafe operation of a golf cart. The unfolding of events that followed are being reviewed with a critical eye --- by local supervising officers, the county sheriff, county prosecutor, and myself. I will be requesting approval from the village council to seek and hire experts to complete an impartial and fair evaluation of the traffic stop, and the subsequent decisions and actions taken by officers of the Put-in-Bay Police Department.

The island saw an unusually high visitor volume for this same weekend compared to previous years. The crowds were unexpected in the volume that continued to arrive throughout the day. A matching volume of local officers, working to prevent potential problems, normally would have been on staff for such an anticipated influx. Our officers eventually called for assistance from the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office and a response was immediately initialized to keep the peace for all of our visitors and residents.

It will take time to sort out all the facts of the evening. In the mean time, the police department has been directed by myself to release all public records available, under Ohio Sunshine law, to requesting parties.

Transparency in our operations is the best service possible I can provide to the public. As a community, we hold our police department accountable for any and all of its decisions.

Therefore, effective Wednesday, June 10, I placed Put-in-Bay Police Chief Steve Riddle on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of an official inquiry. Subsequently, Lt. Mike Russo and Sgt. Melissa Wilde, submitted their verbal resignations to me and returned to their home, abandoning their scheduled evening patrol shift.

Capt. Matt Mariano is serving as the department's acting chief, pending outcome of an investigation and any possible consequences yet to be determined.

I am deeply grateful for the overwhelming community support I've received in taking swift and decisive action to hold our officers accountable. I am deeply grateful for the support from Ottawa County Sheriff Steve Levorchick in providing our community with an immediate response last weekend, and for coordinating with Capt. Matt Mariano today to be prepared for the coming weekend.

I have high confidence in our department's ability to continue to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all of our residents and visitors. With assistance from Sheriff Levorchick, we will be successful this weekend and through the rest of the summer as he aides us in changing the direction of our department.

The village will strive for strong and effective leadership for the future of our island community, and I look forward to taking that path forward in cooperation with our island and county leaders.

Jessica C. Dress