

Eric D. Batista
City Manager



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City Manager Eric D. Batista Statement on Department of Justice Report

WORCESTER, Mass. – The findings by the Department of Justice (DOJ) are both shocking and unacceptable. I want to address the very serious nature of this report and allow space and time for the community and municipality to reflect on it. It is unfathomable to me that any officer of the law—any employee of the City of Worcester—could or would act in such an unlawful, egregious, and immoral manner. It is imperative that the public have trust in their government and its public safety institutions. They must have faith that they will be protected by the system and not victimized by it. I understand that faith and that trust must be earned.

My administration stands firmly on the principles of honesty, integrity, and justice with respect to every member of the Worcester community, and the Worcester Police Department (WPD) is expected to live up to those principles.

While the DOJ investigation focused on a timeframe between 2018 – 2022, it is my administration’s duty to make necessary changes to prevent any future misconduct.

I would like to outline some of the actions we are taking to assure our community that its concerns are taken seriously. I am charging the new Executive Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (EODEI) and WPD with a number of priority initiatives, including to work cooperatively with the Human Rights Commission on training and policy review. I have full confidence in Chief Equity Officer Kevin Lovaincy and Interim Chief of Police Paul Saucier and stand ready to support them with the resources they need to accomplish these goals.

A hotline is being established for members of the public to report any alleged misconduct by police officers. This hotline will be managed outside of the WPD by the Investigations Division within the EODEI. Investigators will examine all evidence and testimony independently and without bias.

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Under my direction, the Training Division within the EODEI will lead trainings, seminars, and workshops relative to behavioral health, implicit bias, and additional topics, all of which will align with and inform written policy within the WPD.

There are several recommendations in the DOJ report, many of which the municipality has already completed or is working toward as part of our commitment to transparency and readily accessible public information. We have already begun improving our data collection and demographic analytics, and a significant amount of data, including Use of Force incidents and Bureau of Professional Standards investigations, is currently accessible on our open data portal Informing Worcester. I recently signed a contract for a new software provider, to help enhance reporting and data capabilities. The conversion is expected to take 12-18 months for full implementation.

Finally, in the coming weeks, I will prepare a report for City Council to review the structure of a Civilian Review Board, to be deliberated upon in concept through due public process.

In the meantime, the members of the Worcester Police Department, who overwhelmingly serve our community with integrity and compassion, will continue their ongoing community outreach to build relationships and trust while continuing to refine and improve Department policies. I take this matter very seriously and pledge to ensure that the proper policies and procedures are in place for accountability.

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