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July 26, 2024

Chief Sam Taylor
Lakeland Police Department
219 N. Massachusetts Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33801

Dear Chief Taylor,

I have reviewed the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's recent investigation regarding the manipulation of body worn cameras ("BWC") and in-car video on March 21, 2024 by four Lakeland Police Officers: Sgt Mark Eby, Officer Anton Jefferson, Officer Jason McCain and Officer Jim Simon. FDLE conducted the investigation to determine if there was any criminal wrongdoing by the four aforementioned officers. I appreciate the thorough and comprehensive investigation conducted by FDLE. In consideration of the factual findings in the report, I have concluded that criminal charges against the subject officers are not warranted. However, the report and my observations of the manipulation of the BWC and in-car video during the pursuit causes me great concern.

The four officers involved in this incident were assigned to the LPD Street Crimes Unit. This unit has performed a valuable service to our community over the years and has routinely put their safety at risk in very dangerous assignments. However, it appears that the four officers involved in this incident have come to believe that the rules that apply to other LPD officers do not apply to them. They appear to feel free to manipulate the BWC's and in-car video at will and believe they are qualified to determine what is relevant evidence in a criminal case. I personally reviewed the BWC and in-car footage and it was alarming how comfortable the officers were with routinely turning off the cameras as soon as they were activated. The officer sitting in the front passenger seat even assists the driving officer with turning off his BWC. And all of this occurs while the supervising officer was in the back seat, manipulating his own camera throughout the chase. The conduct of the officers in this matter indicates either an insufficiency of training and policies regarding BWC and in-car cameras or is an example of officers disregarding the training and policies of LPD. Regardless of the reason, the integrity of the investment by the city of Lakeland in the new camera system is completely undermined and the credibility of each officer becomes an issue.

While criminal charges are not warranted, the conduct of the four officers in this matter has caused me to be concerned about their reliability in current and future cases. The integrity of the criminal justice system depends upon both the prosecution and the defense having access to all of the evidence – whether incriminating or exculpatory. As a result, many cases submitted by these officers will have to be dismissed. Additionally, any future cases submitted by these

officers will receive heightened scrutiny by this office. As the gatekeeper of the criminal justice system, I simply cannot permit cases with questionable integrity into our courts. The actions of the officers in this matter will subject them and other LPD officers to potentially damaging cross examination by defense attorneys during trials; very likely leading to diminished capacity of successful prosecution of LPD cases.

Since you have been chief of police, I have come to know your dedication to getting the job done right and your insistence of excellence. It is my hope that the issues addressed in this letter can be rectified as soon as possible. My fear is that the actions of these four officers are not limited to them alone. In fact, in a review of another case recently, the responding officer repeatedly cut off his microphone during parts of his investigation. For the BWC and in-car cameras to have any value, officers must do their jobs, the devices must record without manipulation and pursuant to the pre-programmed settings. Any necessary redactions must be handled by public records experts and the court system.

I hope that we can discuss, in the very near future, the policies and procedures that are in place at LPD and specifically what is being done to prevent these types of behaviors from ever happening again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Haas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian Haas
State Attorney
10th Judicial Circuit of Florida

cc: FDLE