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November 12, 2008

Co-Chair Thomas Heffelfinger
RNC Public Review Safety Commission
225 South 6th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Co-Chair Andrew Luger
RNC Public Review Safety Commission
200 South 6th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Dear Chairs Heffelfinger & Luger,

Thank you for your interest in meeting to discuss the Republican National Convention. During the convention I spent more than 50 hours on the streets of St. Paul and Minneapolis. I witnessed, first-hand, the events as they unfolded. Since the convention, I have reviewed over 100 hours of video depicting protester actions and police conduct. I observed countless acts of professionalism on behalf of the police officers assigned to this endeavor. They were extremely disciplined and performed in an exemplary fashion. Mobile field force members followed their training and performed as directed by the plan. While the overall plan was sound there was, however, one significant shortcoming that impacted the public's perception and the tactics of police intervention. I offer this observation in the hopes that your review will lay the groundwork for improved planning of future events.

The plan's shortcoming was the lack of standard "soft uniformed" police resources. It resulted in the multitasking of the mobile field force teams which dramatically impacted the perception of the security plan and reduced the enforcement flexibility. Additional "soft uniformed" officers should have been dedicated to primary control of parade route corridors, transportation routes and support of general downtown patrol operations.

Three to five hundred additional standard uniformed officers would have: 1) presented a less intimidating image along the authorized parade route; 2) provided a preventative presence in areas that were victimized; 3) assisted other uniformed officers who were overwhelmed by anarchist actions; and 4) would have freed up the multitasked mobile

field force officers to monitor and address the unauthorized protest marches which deteriorated to vandalism.

At your November 6th public hearing, St. Thomas professor Michael Andregg, was quoted as stating he was especially dismayed by what he called a "rapid transition from soft police presence to very heavy tactical presence."

This perception is a fair observation. It resulted from the plan's shortcoming. Additional soft uniformed officers would have improved the perception of the protesters along the authorized parade route and would have allowed for other intermediate force escalation options.

Decisions regarding staffing and deployment were made by St. Paul Police Department Assistant Chief Matt Bostrom. On several occasions over the final five months of RNC planning I attempted – unsuccessfully – to convince him that additional soft uniformed officers would be beneficial.

In January of 2008, Assistant Chief Bostrom notified us that there would be 1,200 mobile field force members and that they would begin training in April. Other staffing allotments were determined later and were impacted by the overall staffing shortage.

On April 28, 2008 I wrote a letter to Assistant Chief Bostrom regarding staffing for the transportation corridors. That letter states in part: *"Significant preventative police staffing of these areas will reduce the likelihood of early force being utilized by the mobile field force compliment. Securing the transportation corridors and intersections will be manpower intensive but will reduce conflict with protesters and ensure a successful transportation plan."*

Over the next three months several letters were sent to Assistant Chief Bostrom regarding the need for preventive semi-soft uniformed police officers in the plan. In addition, on two occasions I requested a table-top exercise for the mobile field force commanders to address the likely civil disobedience. However, no mobile field force civil disturbance table-top exercises were ever conducted. My May 13th letter to Assistant Chief Bostrom stressed the need for *"officers in semi-soft attire that are not in the current plan"* being able to *"provide for an initial soft/intermediate policing response before the use of perceived serious force."*

On July 10, 2008 (50 days before the convention) at an Executive Steering Committee meeting, Assistant Chief Bostrom and Chief Harrington reported that they were still 1,000 police officers short of the 3,500 target. Because of my concerns regarding adequate resources, I asked Assistant Chief Bostrom how he intended to staff the parade route. He stated that he would have some officers along the route but he was not intending to line the route with uniformed cops. He stated *"We don't have enough people to line the route."* He went on to state that he planned to *"stage the mobile field forces along the route."* (Shortly after this meeting, Chief Harrington and Mayor Coleman's Chief of Staff Ann Mulholland took the lead on addressing the officer recruitment deficit previously handled

by Assistant Chief Bostrom. They did an outstanding job of shrinking the staffing gap in a very short period of time).

Assistant Chief Bostrom believed that the mobile field forces could perform multiple roles at the same time. This assumption was flawed. Mobile field force members spent 120 hours in training to disperse civil disobedience and to make mass arrests of law breakers. They were trained for the specific functions. When called upon they performed as trained.

In summary, the mobile field force officers and commanders were well prepared, disciplined, trained, and supervised during the Republican National Convention. Specifically, SPPD Senior Commander Joe Neuberger, Commander Steve Frazier and Commander Todd Axtell all provided outstanding service to the City of St. Paul. They gave countless hours of their time in developing the mobile field force teams and responded professionally when called upon on September 1st to control widespread criminal behavior. Unfortunately, they were required to handle all types of incidents because of the lack of available standard police resources.

Likewise, SPPD Assistant Chief Tom Smith and the small handful of patrol officers remaining under his command performed valiantly for the first two hours (12:00 – 2:00 p.m.) of the conflict on September 1st as they attempted to curtail the unlawful acts of approximately 500 protesters in unauthorized marches without backup or equipment.

If the plan's lack of flexibility resulted in community concerns regarding police tactics, the responsibility for those perceptions rests with Assistant Chief Bostrom. To complicate this matter, expectations and perceptions of some groups were impacted by the public statements of Assistant Chief Bostrom, in advance of the event, which were in conflict with his actual plan.

Thank you again for your conscientious review of this matter. I have attached copies of my correspondence with Assistant Chief Bostrom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Fletcher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "B".

Bob Fletcher
Ramsey County Sheriff

CC: RNC Public Review Safety Commission Members
Mayor Chris Coleman

Attachments