

CITY OF IDAHO FALLS

Office of the Mayor
City Hall
P.O. Box 50220
Idaho Falls, ID 83405



Rebecca L. Noah Casper
Mayor

Dear Community Members,

May 12, 2017

This coming week, May 14 - May 20, is National Police Week. The Idaho Falls Police Department is one of the most effective, well-trained, and valuable police departments in the state. I appreciate both our officers and police staff for the challenging, important, and sometimes dangerous work that they engage in daily. Many of our police department employees go above and beyond the call of duty, both for our community and to increase internal efficiency.

I wanted to express my gratitude to our incredible men and women who serve in the IFPD and encourage the public to show your support as well. To help celebrate National Police Week, our office is providing a number of "Back the Blue – We love our IFPD" stickers available at City Hall for citizens to pick up and display proudly throughout the community. Also, a Peace Officers Memorial Service is scheduled for May 15 at 6 p.m. at the Bonneville County Courthouse. Please join us and show your support of our police, now and always.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to address and clarify a few issues related to the police department and to provide information that you may or may not have heard in the media or elsewhere. Many changes have occurred within our police department over the past year. Some have concluded that there is a lack of support for our police department and staff among City leaders.

I wish to be very clear—I fully support and am very grateful to the incredible men and women of the IFPD. A modern city cannot exist without an effective and empowered police force. Employee concerns are not ignored by City leaders and the IFPD is no exception. In fact, I am very grateful when employees care enough to come forward with concerns so we can continue to improve.

Recently, several media articles have rushed to judgment prematurely on issues surrounding the IFPD. As a result, I have received communications from citizens expressing concern about a lack of support for our police officers. Some of those communications have contained specific questions about certain employees. Out of respect for City employees, I will not comment on any personnel matter related to any employee in any department. Comments on personnel matters that are being litigated could have significant consequences, such as infringing on an employee's right to a fair trial, an unbiased jury or could impact a decision by a judge.



I am dedicated to creating policies and procedures that are fair and equitable for all employees.

In addressing the police department specifically, I have shown my dedication by organizing a citizen review of the department and by continuing to work toward changes to policies and procedures that reflect the best interest of the all City employees, citizens and taxpayers.

In 2015, I organized the Citizen Review Committee and tasked them with reviewing the police department and recommending ways to encourage efficiency and innovation. I wanted the review to be conducted by citizens because I value citizen engagement and insight. In October 2015, the citizen reviewers presented their observations and recommendations to the City Council. Two of those recommendations were to: 1) eliminate Civil Service Rules and 2) replace them with a written personnel policy to govern personnel actions. We took these recommendations seriously.

When our City Council voted to implement the committee's first recommendation to rescind the Civil Service Rules, the media and others criticized the City for the timing of the vote. Removing or modifying the City's archaic civil service rules has been widely discussed by City leaders for over a decade. Likewise, my administration has been working on this issue since 2014. In addition, many have rushed to judgement that the policy change strips officers of rights. Every city employee (officers included) is granted the rights under the City's existing personnel policy, regardless of whether they were also governed under Civil Service Rules.

Following the second recommendation from our citizen reviewers is another priority. My internal sense of fairness dictates that I treat all employees fairly and I believe City personnel procedures must reflect that as well. The City Council has been—and will continue to be—asked to modify the City's personnel policy as needed. This work is ongoing.

If you have further questions about current issues surrounding the police department, please see the "For the Record" link located on the right-hand side of the city's website that will be posted soon at www.idahofallsidaho.gov. If you do not find answers there to your questions (not specific to confidential personnel records), please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Due to the impending retirement of our Chief of Police, a committee is currently reviewing applications for a new Chief. We have received many impressive responses, both from local applicants and from applicants from other states. I am confident that our community will welcome and support our new Chief of Police, whomever that may be, with open arms. I thank you for your support and care for our police officers and for all City employees.

Serving as your Mayor is an honor and a job I take very seriously. I thank you for your support and your continued engagement.

Sincerely,



Rebecca L. Noah Casper, Mayor
City of Idaho Falls