



City of Takoma Park

From the Desk of the City Manager

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FROM MARSHALL PROJECT

**By: Suzanne Ludlow, City Manager, City of Takoma Park, Maryland
October 2, 2020**

What is the city's ultimate position on why the Brooks incident took place? Was it a failure of training, a problem with department policy, a failure by the handler to implement policy, an accident, or a combination of these explanations?

The primary determination of the City's investigation of the Brooks incident was that this incident was an accident. This is the only such incident involving a Takoma Park Police Department K-9 in the 29 years of our unit. There have been K-9 deployments that are inconsistent with accepted standards in prior years in Takoma Park. However, the City's records reflect that those improper deployments of police K-9s were not by the Takoma Park Police Department's K-9 unit – they occurred when outside law enforcement agencies deployed their police K-9s in the City. The City's K-9 program was begun in 1991 in order to have better oversight of K-9s deployed in Takoma Park.

(Note: In reviewing the history of the City's police K-9 unit, we learned there was a K-9 handler with a dog in the Takoma Park Police Department in approximately 1968-1969. We don't have other information about that K-9 at this time.)

What steps has the city taken since the incident with regard to police K-9s? What steps will it be taking in the future? At this point, has the question of what to do with the K-9 unit been folded entirely into the task force on "reimagining public safety"?

The Police Department reviewed all elements related to the incident and reviewed all policies and procedures regarding police K-9s. Although we found no problems, we retrained all K-9 staff on all operational procedures and added a layer of supervision to ensure best practices continue to be followed. Our K-9 program uses the Montgomery County Police Department canine unit for certification, training, and regular in-service training under the experienced leadership of Mary Davis.

We are looking forward to the discussions with the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force and to its recommendation concerning the K-9 unit in Takoma Park.

I have some documentation that after the incident Drogo was put into a form of remedial training, before ultimately being removed from service. Why was he removed from service? (And why was he put through training first?) And do you all know where he is now?

As part of the standard process after the incident, we had the K-9 tested to see if he was unable to meet standards in responding to commands and other aspects of K-9 service. He passed the tests and could have returned to active service at that time. Since the investigation into the incident continued for many months, a determination was made to keep the involved K-9 out of active law enforcement service out of an abundance of caution. He was retired to live with his former handler.

Jessica Garrison is no longer with the department; when exactly was her departure, and did it have anything to do with this incident?

Jessica Garrison's employment ended on April 3, 2020. As a matter of policy, the City does not comment on personnel matters.