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**The Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP) Responds to the
Announcements by the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police Announcing Procedural
Changes Following the Critical Incident involving the October 13, 2021
Death of James Rogers**

December 21, 2021

Following the death of James Rogers, Tasered at the hands of Pittsburgh police on October 13, 2021, the Black Political Empowerment Project (B-PEP) on November 1, 2021 called for a full investigation into the death of Mr. Rogers which followed an incident involving a bicycle. B-PEP also requested a full review and examination of *all* policies and procedures involving the use of tasers by Pittsburgh police officers. We were encouraged to learn tonight that the City's Pittsburgh Bureau of Police did in fact empanel an Internal Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB) to evaluate the officers' actions and to gauge policy compliance. As we suspected, there were procedural failures which contributed to the tragic death of James Rogers.

We appreciate that this tragic death was not ignored, and that this needless death was apparently taken seriously by the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police and the Pittsburgh Department of Public Safety. I received a call directly from the Director of Public Safety, Wendell Hissrich, soon after he received the letter from B-PEP stating his deep concerns about death of James Rogers, and pledged that there would be in depth investigation. We were heartened to learn tonight that there will be at least some level of discipline given to some eight Pittsburgh Bureau of Police officers, including two supervisors. We also appreciate the admittance on the part of the City of Pittsburgh that though the city has been attempting to implement new measures

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Cynthia Vanda
Karen Wright

meant to ensure additional accountability of how our Police Bureau performs its duties, including mandating de-escalation and implicit bias training, and efforts to further examine how trust could be increased on the part of the Pittsburgh community toward its police force, that they have not been able to fully meet that goal, and that more needs to be done.

In our *initial* review of their recommendations going forward we commend the City's Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB) for recommending that:

1. Any use of force incident will require the presence of a supervisor on scene to complete a medical assessment and request appropriate personnel. (We view this as crucial).
2. Any incident involving the positive deployment of a Taser will require emergency medical services personnel to assess the patient (which apparently did not take place following the arrest of James Rogers).
3. Pittsburgh Bureau of Police personnel will be retrained in accordance with established PBP Training Academy Duty to Intervene policy. (Apparently this was a gross oversight on the part of the other officers present during this tragic incident).
4. The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police will streamline its organizational review of Use of Force by both appropriate command staff and the Training Academy to expeditiously ensure policy compliance. (*Expeditious* policy compliance could be the difference between life and death in some of the critical incidents. This use of force review is also something that I, as member of Mayor Peduto's Pittsburgh Community Taskforce for Police Reform, strongly advocated for, along with the entire Task Force.)

We also thought that it was a strong statement on the part of the Pittsburgh Bureau that *all* sworn members of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, since the death of James Rogers, were *required* to complete a Taser refresher course, followed by an exam. It was also good to know that this activity was in *addition* to the yearly mandated Taser recertification requirement for *all* officers. In addition, we feel that another important statement was made by the Pittsburgh Bureau by requiring *all* of its officers to become

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fully certified Emergency Medical Responders. We feel that such training could have possibly saved the life of James Rogers.

We rarely hear an apology from the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police or the City's Department of Public Safety, or from few police departments in the nation when a Black man needlessly dies at the hands of police, but in this case an apology was offered to the family, friends and supporters of Mr. Rogers by the Chief of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, Scott Schubert:

“Jim Rogers will serve as a sober reminder of the tremendous responsibility all officers bear when they wear the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police badge. Every resident and visitor to the City of Pittsburgh is owed the highest standard of care when they are in the custody of Pittsburgh police. In the case of Jim Rogers, we failed our fellow citizen. The disciplinary measures and procedural changes we are announcing today are intended to ensure a tragedy such as this never occurs again in the City of Pittsburgh.”

We salute that powerful statement from Chief Schubert and ask that that statement be reinforced, on an annual basis, to each and every Pittsburgh Police officer. We cannot bring back James Rogers, but his death, apparently will *not* be in vain, and will lay the foundation for a more just, fair, informed, and level of sensitivity in the use of force in Pittsburgh for years to come.

Now the City of Pittsburgh must look at how it can appropriately compensate the family of James Rogers to further assure that such a tragedy will never be replicated going forward.

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