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POSITION PAPER DENVER CHIEF OF POLICE

The Denver Police Department has a rich and storied history. Mayor Michael B. Hancock appointed the first ever Chief of Police from outside the ranks of the Denver Police Department. Robert C. White entered the position in late 2011 with very little institutional knowledge, but armed with a vision to propel the Denver Police Department into the new era of 21st Century Policing. Chief White embraced the principles and practices of modern policing, and was emphatic about community policing. Regarding community policing, the police department is doing much right, but more can be done!

Over the past six years our organization was able to enhance our rudimentary community policing efforts into an arsenal of avant-garde programs. As chief, I would continue to grow these programs and create new ones that would make Denver a national model for progressive community policing programs. I have had a multitude of success implementing progressive community policing programs within Police District 2 since my appointment to commander over six years ago.

The District 2 and 5 Halloween Party, Daddy Bruce Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive, Safe Summer Events, Brick City Event, National Night Out Events, Simmons Foundation Summer Basketball Camp, Whittier Neighborhood Association Summer Safety BBQ, and many other partnerships must be modeled in other areas of the city. These proven programs have augmented positive collaborations throughout our community. The community policing programs have given us the legitimacy and transparency needed to proactively police our diverse community.

One such program began specifically in northeast Denver to find meaningful employment for young men and women involved in gangs, it launched in early 2017. A partnership was formed between Mr. Haroun Cowan's of the Impact Empowerment Group Work Force Development Program, Pro-Pak Company, and myself. The Office of Economic Development contracted with IEG in late 2017 to enhance the program's success. The program has now employed 220 people, 85% being from northeast Denver. The men and women are hired by local companies and given an opportunity to make a good wage, gain benefits, and turn away from the false promises of gangs. I am a firm believer that restorative justice programs, diversion programs, and work force programs are essential to the success of a healthy city. A recent article in the Denver Post noted that the state prison system is overcrowded, and in fact may run out of space as early as 2019. As chief, I would continue to amplify the success of all programs to keep young men and women from entering the criminal justice system.

Recently, the police department has become overwhelmed with its current array of community policing programs. The district commanders and support bureaus are often times competing for the same resources to conduct large-scale community events. As chief, I would create a new Community Policing Bureau specifically focused on effectively and efficiently managing the department's response to all community events. The Community Police Bureau will coordinate with the district commands, support bureaus and units, and ensure a professional response to each community event. Lastly, the bureau would be enabled to coordinate all equipment, vintage cars, personnel, finances, and other city team members to manage the resource intensive community events calendar.

The biggest challenge I will face as chief will be the continued implementation of the new use-of-force policy. As chief, I have the tenure, experience, skill, and influence within the organization to successfully implement the new use-of-force policy predicated on “sanctity of life.” Chief White has echoed his desire, along with the community, to have this in place prior to his retirement from the police department. As chief, I will ensure that the policy is implemented and the full training component is carried through to fruition. My administration will continue to prioritize the reduction of use-of-force incidents with our citizens and officers alike.

I possess the necessary political acumen to navigate a complex political arena. I am a tactful diplomat, an innovator, a problem solver, and a leader. I can work with many diverse groups of people that have competing agendas. As chief, I will continue to grow strong community partnerships with both internal and external partners, community leaders, and other criminal justice partners. The partnerships will allow us to problem solve and advance future collaborations. I will also continue our training programs that message my philosophy down to the newest team member in the organization. I believe we must become astute students of our profession.

As chief, I will ensure that my command staff becomes students of the Police Executive Research Forum’s (PERF) Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics Training Guide for defusing critical incidents. PERF has recommended 30 best practices in key areas of use-of-force policy, training and tactics, equipment, and information needs. My annual budget will continue to allot monies for team members to attend the Senior Management Institute for Police to learn about critical issues in policing. The amplification of law enforcement best practices within the Denver Police Department’s existing culture will allow a positive paradigm shift to safer alternatives to the traditional law enforcement use-of-force responses. An unwavering commitment to PERF, International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP), the FBI National Academy, and the Denver Police Department will be cornerstones of my administration so that we continue to propagate into the premier law enforcement agency in the nation.

During my time at the FBI National Academy and SMIP I learned that the Denver Police Department enjoys a reputation as a progressive forward thinking police agency. As chief, I would continue to fortify those professional networks and accomplishments. In 2017, I attended the CACP in Evans, Colorado. Sadly, I realized that locally we do not garner the same respect as we do on the national law enforcement landscape. As chief, I would safeguard our commitment to our neighbors and cultivate our relationships with our local, state, and federal partners. As chief, I realize that there are over 18,000 departments in the United States committed to discovering a better way to serve our communities. I will commit my organization to creating and finding the best programs in the nation to bestow on the city that we love.

In late 2017, the chief began messaging that he would soon be leaving the department. The department quickly became mired in internal politics. The two-deputy chiefs opposition to the chief, and each other, exacerbated an on-going problem of ineffectual leadership. The uneasiness has caused decision paralysis, siloed communications, and a host of internal problems for the organization. The absence of leadership from those senior management positions has permeated throughout the ranks of the organization. As chief, I will immediately address these problems by modeling leadership from the top. Leadership is not a question of having power over subordinates, but of having influence with them. I possess the characteristics, skills, and abilities to correct the mistakes caused by the current absence of leadership.

It has been said that “culture eats strategy,” and it is time to take an intrinsic view of our police department’s culture. A leader must understand that every time we speak, make a decision, tell a joke, send emails, or interact with others, that we are shaping the culture around us. As chief, I will bring back an unwavering commitment to integrity, sense of fairness and equity, and an openness to innovation and

progressive change. I will remind my administration that as leaders we must be more mindful and intentional in our roles as architects of our culture.

As chief, I have the courage to immediately restructure our fledgling command staff. My transformational leadership style is bolstered by the knowledge, skill, and ability I possess to enhance our organizational success by developing the repositioning of key personnel. The department has a wide variety of highly motivated, educated, and diverse leaders poised to assume management positions to lead the department into the future. The need to go from “good to great” calls for the right people being put on the bus, then deciding where to drive it. The communities and the officers we serve need the best of us today, right now.

My administration will have leaders that understand that they are the architects and designers of our police culture. Our teams become products of our leadership. My team must improve not only how we lead today, but also how we must develop our law enforcement leaders of tomorrow. As chief, I will create mentoring programs for all of our people to assume leadership roles within our organization. Specifically, I will immediately work with our finite group of female command officers to create a premier leadership program for our entire allotment of female officers that aspire to become leaders in our career field.

As chief, I will also encourage a culture of positive collaboration within our ranks. We are currently stymieing free thought and dialogue through a culture of fear, mistrust, and perceived inequities. Our current culture has been trapped in a point of decision paralysis and guarded communication silos. The amplification of our pool of talented leaders being repositioned will have an immediate impact on shifting the existing culture. Our organization must immediately embrace the repositioning of the management team if we are going to realize the necessary implementation of programs needed for future successes.

My administration will immediately be more accessible to the rank and file of the department. Recent surveys indicate that we are not doing a very good job communicating our message, therefore making it impossible that our goals will every be realized. My team will “manage by walking around” and find people doing things right. We must understand that our culture has become what it is for a reason, and that history must be understood and respected. I will model our belief systems, language, and ultimately our behaviors through accentuating our mantras and proudly displaying our visual artifacts.

As chief, I plan on forming a COPS Committee that will meet monthly so that the rank and file can communicate concerns directly to me. I will also conduct a minimum of two “Chief’s Calls” which will be held in the day and evening hours making me accessible to the rank and file for questions and concerns. My staff will also visit Roll Calls on a regular basis to have productive dialogue with the officers. The men and women need to know that we value their sacrifice to our great city. A nice gesture, warm thank you, and the simple act of listening to our team will make an immediate impact on improving the over all morale of our beloved agency.

The Denver Police Department is poised to become the premier law enforcement agency in the nation. As chief, I will continue to lead the organization into the future through transparent, legitimate, and energetic leadership. I understand that we must continue to work on building trust with our community through sincere community policing programs, reducing the use-of-force incidents with our citizens, and an unwavering commitment to excellence within our organization.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Calo

