

#8CANTWAIT RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNITY FROM LAUREL POLICE CHIEF HAMILL



At the Laurel Police Department, we have long been committed to serving the community and doing so in a fair and equitable fashion. Each of our employees are devoted to the philosophies of Community Policing and Engagement in order to best serve every person. We have a long-standing commitment of service before self and seek to build upon this foundation to further enhance our relationships with our community. We have received many inquiries regarding the #8CANTWAIT recommendations for Law Enforcement agency use of force policies. We currently have in place policies that address, to some degree, all eight of the #8CANTWAIT recommendations, as discussed below. However, I don't believe it is enough for us to just discuss these important issues in order to have a better understanding of how we serve the community, so we have included information regarding other matters of concern that we have been asked about as well.

Also, we have been in the process of reviewing many of our policies, including the use of force, and look forward to working with members of the community, as well as our Mayor and City Council, as we conduct these on-going reviews. We continue to work each day to further enhance our community engagement efforts and to build upon our relationships with all our communities here in Laurel. The underlying foundation of what we do as peace officers is based in having a trusting, communicative and honest relationship with the people we swear to protect and serve.

[#8CANTWAIT Policy Recommendations related to Laurel Police Policy](#)

1. Duty to Intervene:

All Laurel Police Officers have the responsibility to intervene and attempt to stop other department members from taking part in unlawful or improper behavior and will take appropriate and immediate action in any situation in which they know or should have known their failure to act would result in an excessive response to resistance or other egregious behavior that shocks the conscience.

2. Require De-escalation:

Currently, the Laurel Police Department trains all sworn personnel to use de-escalation techniques prior to using physical force. All sworn personnel must successfully complete annual de-escalation training, where communication, increasing distance and de-escalating force are taught, with the goal of minimizing the application of force to keep both citizens and officers safe. Officers are expected to utilize de-escalation techniques whenever possible during potential use of force incidents in order to resolve incidents safely and minimize the chance of injuries to all.

3. Ban Shooting at Moving Vehicles:

Our policy for all sworn personnel is that the discharge of firearms at or from moving vehicles is prohibited, unless exigent circumstances exist making it necessary to protect the officer's life or the life of another, as provided within the use of force policy. The discharge of a firearm cannot be used to “disable a vehicle,” and officers cannot intentionally place themselves in the path of a moving vehicle where an officer’s use of deadly force would be the probable outcome.

4. Ban Chokeholds & Strangleholds:

The LPD Policy on the use of neck restraints, neck holds, or any other carotid control technique is strictly prohibited by any member of the Laurel Police Department. This has been the Laurel Police Department’s policy since the 1990’s.

5. Require Comprehensive Reporting:

The current policy for the Department is a comprehensive reporting, review and notification process on all use of force incidents. A Police Supervisor is to be notified when an officer uses force and must review all use of force reports, which are then forwarded to the Patrol Commander and Use of Force Training Staff for further review, including body worn camera footage. Reviews include the determination if the officer's actions followed policy, training and the requirements of the law, and if an Administrative or Criminal investigation is warranted.

6. Require Use of Force Continuum:

Our department has a use of force continuum that officers are trained in and must follow.

7. Exhaust All Other Means Before Shooting:

The Laurel Police Department values the sanctity of life and its officers are trained to exhaust all reasonable means to avoid the use of lethal force. The current training and policy dictate that sworn personnel are only authorized to use lethal force, when it meets the requirements of the law and as a last resort.

8. Require Warning Before Shooting:

The current policy requires sworn personnel, when possible, to issue a verbal warning prior to the use of lethal force. This is in department policy and reinforced in training as well.

Sanctity of Life and Transparency

When our officers are trained on the use of force, the clear and concise take away message is, and must continue to be, that the sanctity of each and every life is critically important and to use all means reasonably possible to protect life and to protect people from serious injury as well. Our officers are hired with a strong moral foundation, are then trained to grow through integrity and ethics, and to apply fair and constitutional policing.

In addition, the Laurel Police Department is committed to transparency and served as a leader in the State of Maryland in the implementation of a Body Worn Camera program. Our officers were the first municipal police department in the state to wear body worn cameras as a means of accountability and transparency. This is just one way that as a department we ensure to the public fairness and adherence to our oaths as police officers.

Community Outreach and Community Engagement

As a department we encourage and strive to connect and listen to you, the community. We welcome open and honest dialogue and would like to hear from you.

We encourage all citizens to get involved with and interact with our police department to help provide feedback and guidance on what the community needs or wants from us. This may be just having conversations as we see each other in the community or being involved in department programs and activities. There are a number of advisory boards within the department, and other ways, that the community can get involved.

We host a Faith Based Advisory Board, a Citizens Advisory Board, and a Business Advisory Board all that meet directly with the Chief. We encourage members of the community to reach out to us should they wish to be involved in any of these boards. Additionally, we hold a Citizens Police Academy that all citizens are encouraged to be a part of, and our next academy will begin in September 2020. We are currently accepting applications for the next class. We also offer a ride-along program so people can better connect with our officers and see what they actually do in the community.

We participate with the community in numerous other ways. These events include hosting Coffee with the Cops, working closely with schools to assist with such things as the D.A.R.E. program, reading with students and discussing safety concerns. We hold an annual Cops Camp for children during the summer, we participate in the Santa with a Badge program that provides gifts for children of families in need, and host an annual National Night Out, Town Hall Meetings, and much more. Our officers also participate in parades, picnics and many other community functions. We provide support for charitable events throughout the city including runs and other athletic events and participate in other community-based functions in order to be a true partner in the community.

We also work with a number of area and national nonprofits to support their efforts. We work closely with the Special Olympics of Maryland by participating in the Torch Run, the annual Polar Bear Plunge and supporting their Tip-A-Cop program as well. We also work closely with nonprofit organizations and faith-based organizations within our city to participate in their food donation drives, especially during the holiday season and the current COVID-19 crisis.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope it answers many of your questions and concerns. Please think seriously about participating in our programs or just talking with a member of the department about policing in our community. We look forward to working together to make Laurel a better place for all to live and thrive.