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City Leaders Outline Independent Review of Columbus' Protest Response

Former US Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio Carter Stewart and OSU's Glenn College named as investigative research team

COLUMBUS – Today, Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein, Mayor Andrew J. Ginther, Council President Shannon G. Hardin and Police Chief Thomas Quinlan announced an independent, outside, after-action research review of the City's response to recent protests.

“As leaders, we must hold ourselves accountable to the residents of Columbus. City officials have the responsibility to recognize, assess and improve areas where we fell short in our response to the recent protests. And, equally so, we need to identify and build upon what we got right,” said City Attorney Klein. “To provide solid and holistic analysis, we need an outside, objective team. I'm proud that we've come together to choose former U.S. Attorney Carter Stewart and the Glenn College to do the independent research necessary to help this city heal and ultimately be a national leader in how we handle protests in the future.”

During the conference, City leaders named former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio Carter M. Stewart as special investigative researcher. They also announced that Ohio State's John Glenn College of Public Affairs will oversee the research project. The sponsored research will provide a holistic and operational analysis of the City's response to the protests from late-May to mid-July with the goal of delivering recommendations for enhancing the work of the Division of Police.

“It's an honor to be asked to lead this research effort, and a great responsibility,” said Stewart. “This is a moment of pain for Columbus and cities across the country. But it's also an opportunity to self-reflect and grow as a community. That's essentially what this research project is intended to do. We're going to look at the facts of what happened, how we got to this moment, what went right, what went wrong, and figure out how we can do better.”

With the assistance of the Glenn College, Stewart plans to soon begin gathering information about involved government agencies and officers, training policies and protocols, as well as other relevant data. Stewart also plans to interview City officers, staff and leaders.

“The Glenn College is well positioned within the University and the scholarly community to bring together diverse research perspectives around policing, community engagement, and civil rights,” said Dr. Brown. “The John Glenn College of Public Affairs is honored to be part of this important project and dedicated to providing thorough, unbiased and objective research that can help the city and the Columbus community move forward.”

Leaders said they expect the scope of this independent and impartial review to cover areas such as:

- The City’s preparedness for the protests
- How protestors’ rights were or were not balanced with public safety concerns
- Police preparedness, tactics and wellness
- Internal communications and community relations

“Now is the time to look back at how we handled the protests,” said Mayor Ginther. “I fully support the review proposed by City Attorney Klein. I look forward to the recommendations and to continuing to make Columbus the very best city it can be.”

Funding for the research, which is expected to be around \$250,000 for the four- to five-month project, will come primarily from the Columbus Division of Police Law Enforcement Contraband Seizure Fund. Approval of the use of these CPD funds to enter into contract will be on the City Council agenda for July 27.

“I’m always looking forward to acquiring resources and creating meaningful reforms that will help us deliver on a promise to be here for every person in our community,” said Chief Quinlan. “Sometimes to look forward we must pause and look backward and critically assess the methods used to achieve our mission.”

The group said the goal will be to have a report on the analysis, along with recommendations for change, by the end of 2020 in order to make any necessary policy alterations in a timely manner.

“I know firsthand that we did not live up to our community’s standards during the protest response,” said Council President Hardin. “This operational review by Carter Stewart and the Glenn College will provide our community the chance to have external, objective researchers provide a clear-eyed analysis so that residents can safely make their voices heard in the future.”

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