

# Office of the Hunterdon County Prosecutor

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## **MEDIA RELEASE – JUNE 17, 2020**

### **ACTING HUNTERDON COUNTY PROSECUTOR SPEAKS AT HUNTERDON COUNTY FREEHOLDER MEETING**

Acting Prosecutor Michael J. Williams addressed the Hunterdon County Freeholders at their June 16, 2020, meeting and discussed various topics impacting our County and the nation. These topics included the tragic death of George Floyd, the protests taking place throughout the country, and Hunterdon County law enforcement's approach to use of force incidents and law enforcement accountability.

According to Acting Prosecutor Williams, "I want to acknowledge the extremely difficult times that we all find ourselves in – back in March we began dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, and three weeks ago we watched the tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis that led to the arrest of four police officers. This tragedy, horrific as it is, creates a basis for change and reform."

Acting Prosecutor Williams went on to say that the events in Minneapolis have re-started a national dialogue on social justice and racial equality. The death of Mr. Floyd has raised the issue of law enforcement accountability, and many Hunterdon County residents are concerned and want to know how it will be addressed.

Acting Prosecutor Williams stated, "The public should know that the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office and local law enforcement leaders in the County are absolutely committed to a fair, just, and bias-free criminal justice system. These are not just words. Law enforcement in this County and state back them up."

Acting Prosecutor Williams detailed the current SOPs (standard operating procedures) and policies Hunterdon County uses to track use of force incidents. He explained that every such incident requires an independent review process that ensures uniformity and produces transparency and factual findings. The Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office's Internal Affairs Unit is responsible for tracking every use of force incident that takes place in the County.

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Prior to being appointed as the Acting Prosecutor, Williams spent nearly 30 years with the Division of Criminal Justice where he was involved in helping to enforce our current statewide use of force policies. Acting Prosecutor Williams said that these policies are currently being reviewed and updated by the Attorney General's Office. In an effort to foster greater public input, the Hunterdon County Prosecutor's Office – along with the other County Prosecutor's Offices – will be conducting community listening sessions on how to build a better statewide use of force policy. That outreach will ask listeners to provide input for that policy.

Acting Prosecutor Williams further stated that "We have had 9 protests in six different townships since May 31<sup>st</sup>. Those protests involved more than 4,200 participants, and all were peaceful and orderly with no arrests or damage to property. I believe that this is a direct credit not only to the protesters, but also to the extensive training, planning, and conduct of our law enforcement community."

Anonymous tips can be submitted by calling Crime Stoppers at 1-800-321-0010, going online at [www.CrimeStoppersHunterdon.com](http://www.CrimeStoppersHunterdon.com) or through the free "P3 Tips" smartphone app. All tips are anonymous and kept confidential.

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