

Friends, Colleagues, Community Leaders and Citizens:

The men and women of the St. Petersburg Police Department truly appreciate the support we continue to receive from our community. During this election season, I have continued to emphasize the mission of the organization and stay out of the "politics." However, I want each candidate to know that I will challenge gross misrepresentation of the facts, as it relates to public safety, on as many fronts as possible.

Scott Wagman has sent out such gross misrepresentation of the facts in his campaign material indicating crime in Tampa is down 46% while St. Petersburg is up 9%. The City of Tampa has reported a 46% drop in crime over the last six years (2002 to 2008), but he uses a six-month figure from St. Petersburg instead of a multi-year figure. Crime in St. Petersburg actually fell almost 10% from 2001 to 2008, and violent crime was down 23% during that time.

I have been part of the St. Petersburg Police Department for 27 years and have been through several election processes. Public safety has always been at the forefront of those elections, and this election season is no different. Most candidates (none of the Mayoral candidates in this election to my knowledge) have very little, if any, true law enforcement experience or background. Therefore, each of them should be asked who they are listening to on the subject. I agree, public safety is important and should be debated. However, the candidates have a duty to tell the truth and not misrepresent facts of such importance which would instill fear in the public. Anything less should be an indicator of how their administration would be run.

Here are the facts, regardless of what some have indicated:

- 1) We are aggressive in enforcing the law: Arrests for all crimes are up 21% (11,525 in 2001 to 13,902 in 2008), which is the highest in the City's history. We are on pace to exceed that number and make over 16,000 arrests in 2009.
- 2) We are serious about removing drugs and drug dealers from our community: Arrests for drug-related offenses rose 52% (1,924 in 2001 to 2,932 in 2008), which is 1,000 more per year.
- 3) We are committed to the community policing philosophy and have never moved away from community policing. We are now using technology to enhance our efforts in a much more significant way.
- 4) We are committed to our neighborhoods as evidenced by our initiation of the Community and Police Engagement (CAPE) Program.
- 5) We are committed to fully staffing our sworn officer positions, which has been increased to 545, effective October 1, 2009. In fact, we are now at fully staffed for the first time in over a decade.
- 6) We are committed to proactive policing by ensuring that our officers have time available to work on problem solving as well as responding quickly when needed. From 2002 to 2008, response times are down for Priority 1 calls from 7.2 to 5.6 minutes, Priority 2 calls from 9.9 to 7.2 minutes, and Priority 3 calls from 22.9 to 18.9 minutes, all exceeding the national averages.

- 7) We are committed to professionalism as evidenced by our recent reaccreditation at both the national (Flagship Agency) and state level, as well as citizen complaints against Department personnel being down 45% (122 in 2001 to 67 in 2008).

In closing, the men and women of the St. Petersburg Police Department are committed to the safety of our community. Please contact us or visit our Web site at www.stpete.org/police if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Charles "Chuck" Harmon
Chief of Police
St. Petersburg Police Department