



CITY OF RICHMOND News Release

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Police "Take-Home" Car Policy Tightened

(**Richmond, VA**) - Mayor Dwight C. Jones today issued an update highlighting changes in the Richmond Police Department's (RPD) Take-Home Car Policy. Acknowledging the benefits of a take-home car policy within City limits, the Mayor noted his desire to begin the process of completely phasing out assigning marked take-home vehicles to officers who live outside the City.

"Within the City limits, a take-home marked vehicle program offers the benefit of an increased police presence and heightened visibility in our neighborhoods. This works to deter crime. Allowing selected individuals (special operations, sector lieutenants and command staff) who live within 15 miles of the City limits to take vehicles home allows for a quicker response to critical incidents and enhances the solvability of crimes. What we don't want is a lax policy that allows for vehicles to be taken out of the City to distant localities. I believe the proposed changes that Chief Norwood has brought forth will strengthen our controls and set more appropriate parameters," said Mayor Jones.

The changes in the RPD policy were presented to City Council today in response to a July 15 date that was established during the budget process. The Government Operations Committee is set to meet on July 23 to review the revised policy with Chief Bryan Norwood. Key components of the changes include:

- Establishment of a geographic parameter to include a 15 mile boundary from the City of Richmond for any take-home vehicles assigned to persons living outside of the City limits. This parameter is tied to a goal of having these responders on scenes within 45 minutes of being alerted. *No such parameter previously existed.*
- Enhanced eligibility criteria for marked take-home vehicles within the City limits to include officers who are residents of the City and have completed the probationary employment period. *Officers in good standing who are residents of the City will now enjoy immediate eligibility to apply for the take-home car program.*
- Establishment of an authorization policy for other take-home vehicles. The new authorization process provides for additional eligibility criteria including the need to respond to after-hour call back investigations, the impact on incident management response time, as well as certain management and infrastructure needs. *Previously officers were awarded the privilege of a take-home vehicle based solely on conduct and upon availability.*

(more)

"We've worked to be sure that the changes take into account operational needs as well as public safety concerns. Based on the new policy, I've identified 28 vehicles that can be immediately removed from the take-home program and we have begun the process of removing those vehicles," said Chief Norwood. Estimated savings for those vehicles amount to approximately \$98,000 in the current fiscal year. Prior to this change in policy, the Chief had already taken actions to remove 23 other vehicles from service, or to shift the funding of the vehicles from City funds (general funds) to other sources of funding.

Mayor Jones indicated that the immediate changes in the revised policy are part of the short term solution and that longer term objectives include providing additional incentives for RPD personnel to reside in the City of Richmond. "I would like to see more partnerships with local lenders for special loan packages and hope to identify more opportunities to work with developers and builders who can provide special housing packages and other incentives for workers to live in the City," said Mayor Jones.

Aside from the police take-home car policy review, the Administration is undertaking a comprehensive broad based review of all departments that have take-home vehicles. Mayor Jones noted that the City's new Chief Administrative Officer, Byron Marshall, will be overseeing the broad based review and streamlining the City's policies where overall vehicle usage is concerned. By far, the RPD has the largest number of take-home vehicles, but there are other departments that have more limited vehicle use needs. Those department's policies will be carefully reviewed and revised as necessary.

Council President Kathy Graziano commented, "We really appreciate Mayor Jones coming forward with this report. We will review it carefully. I continue to be satisfied with the Mayor and his administration's approach to open information sharing."