



Village of El Portal

500 Northeast 87th Street
El Portal, Florida 33138-3517
Telephone (305) 795-7880
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November 16, 2018

Dear Village of El Portal Residents;

I want to take a moment to provide you information directly on the changes that I am in the process of implementing for the betterment of our El Portal Police Department (EPPD) and Village. As you know, public safety has been a growing concern over this last year. Unfortunately, during that time our Village EPPD has experienced excessive officer turnover, fatigue and high overtime for full-time officers, and inadequate shift coverage such as the night-shift.

Over the last year, our Village has conducted numerous public meetings, conversations with residents and the Council, and also listened to the concerns raised by our officers. I am currently working with the staff to address these critical issues. You should know, that this process will be guided by a professional assessment of our Police Department. The Village hired an independent law enforcement consulting firm, McGrath Consulting Group, based out of Illinois to conduct a comprehensive assessment of all aspects of our Police Department, including recruitment and retention, hiring, training, scheduling, among other areas. The McGrath team that conducted the assessment was comprised of former police chiefs, a police human resource professional, and long tenured policing professionals. McGrath reviewed documents, job descriptions, and standard operating procedures. McGrath also conducted three days of one-on-one interviews with me, our police staff and Interim Chief, Mayor and Councilmembers, and our Village CFO.

McGrath identified several areas across the entire department and its operations that require our Administration's immediate attention. They also issued several preliminary recommendations in areas of training, scheduling, recruiting, administration, officer performance evaluations. Immediately addressing all of the deficiencies McGrath identified is paramount to moving our Police Department in the right direction.

On November 13, 2018, our Village's agreement with Interim Chief Ronnie Hufnagel ended. Recognizing her best efforts as the Interim Chief and she will resume her previous position as sergeant with the department. I also hired a new Interim Police Chief who will spearhead our Police Department's transition as we implement the changes required to address the areas of concern identified by the assessment.

Our new Interim Police Chief is Jose Perez. He is a retired City of Miami Major with over thirty years of military and law enforcement supervisory experience. He has a bachelor's degree from Florida International University and a master's degree in Public Administration from Arkansas State University.

Chief Perez is appointed as Interim Chief for an initial term of six months commencing on November 19, 2018. The Village will also have an option to continue the relationship on a month-to-month basis after the term expires. The Village intends to conduct a competitive hiring process to hire a permanent Police Chief in the next six months and Interim Chief Perez will be allowed to apply for the position as well. That process will be transparent, and you will be kept informed at each step. As always, you may contact my office with any questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Christia E. Alou", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Christia E. Alou
Village Manager
Village of El Portal