As many of you know, yesterday, Thursday, June 4, 2020, an afternoon protest/rally was conducted at Generations Park in recognition of the tragic events surrounding the death of George Floyd. Several days ago, the Bedford Police Department (BPD) was contacted by the young lady initiating the event. As a result of this conversation, the PD actively engaged with her in order to ensure the protest would be conducted peacefully and without incident.

Our world continues to get more complicated by the day. Between the COVID-19 pandemic, world events, economic and budgetary stresses, and now the reaction to the death of George Floyd, we are experiencing an unprecedented series of events. The totality of these events has, and continues, to hit home here in Bedford. The senseless death of George Floyd was unnecessary and an example of the excessive use of force by a few select individuals in the Minneapolis Police Department. Let’s be clear, racism in any form should be rejected. It only takes the action of a few people to tarnish the reputation and image of everyone. The same holds true with protestors. As we see news from all around the country, the actions of a few individuals, with the intent to create chaos and destruction, has tarnished the efforts of all who seek to voice their dissatisfaction with recent events through peaceful protests.

With the above in mind, I am proud to report that the event held yesterday afternoon was conducted peacefully and without major incident. Other than a few individuals, everyone was respectful and considerate of those speaking and attending the protest. I want to express my appreciation towards everyone in attendance, for your conduct, and for your passion. I want to thank the organizers for their efforts and consideration in putting this event together. Your message is appropriate, we heard it, and we will strive to continue to be excellent servants of our community. It was my honor to attend and to speak with many of you. Un-beknown to the organizers or the BPD, several protesters continued gathering after the protest and marched through the streets to the Law Enforcement Center (LEC). This appears to have been intentional and put together by a select few individuals, again, without the knowledge of the original organizers. Many of you may have heard this group or encountered them on their march. Once at the LEC they continued protesting until breaking up and gradually returning to the Park and thus returning to their homes.

I want to take this opportunity to say how proud I am of Bedford. The result of yesterday’s events is a testament to how blessed we are to live here. Chief Jeff Gibson and the entire Bedford Police Department has a history of working proactively with the public on several fronts. With little notice, they worked with the organizers to help put together a productive, organized, and peaceful event. Both City staff and Bedford officers showed respect to all in attendance and honored their right to gather and voice their concerns in response to recent events. As is their duty, the Bedford PD took all steps necessary to protect and to serve the citizens of Bedford and to ensure our safety. At no time was any individual or business placed in harm’s way. PD saw to this. As the protest morphed into a march, Bedford officers took immediate steps to ensure that the marchers, regular pedestrians, and oncoming traffic would not be adversely impacted by the “impromptu” march. As several attendees succumbed to the heat, our Police and Fire Departments were immediately on the scene to assist. And as certain individuals engaged officers directly, in an attempt to elicit emotional reactions, our officers maintained their dignity and cool. In such an environment it only takes one misplaced word or action to create the spark that then results in a fire. Our officers showed remarkable poise and discipline in their conduct yesterday and I have no doubt that while their ongoing training helps, it speaks volumes about the character of the men and women who put those uniforms on daily.

Thank you to Chief Gibson and the entire Bedford Police Department. Thank you to Chief Fay and the Fire Department. Thank you to Interim City Manager Blackwell and all City staff. Your actions and conduct yesterday helped to ensure no spark ignited. Lastly thank you to all of you. Please join me in congratulating the Bedford PD and everyone who had a hand in the successful outcome yesterday. Also, take comfort in the knowledge that the men and women of the Bedford Police Department continue to dedicate themselves to our protection and to treating everyone with the compassion and dignity they deserve.