STATEMENT OF MAYOR THOMAS LANKEY

June 5, 2020

“These are painful and difficult times. The murder of George Floyd further exposed the deep divisions that still exist in our country and has shown us all how much more work needs to be done to root out racism in our communities. The police officers responsible for this atrocious event have been rightfully charged and will face the consequences for this horrific crime, but that does not begin to put an end to the pain felt by so many across our country.

As mayor, and as an individual who cares for those around me, I realize that the best thing I can do at this moment is listen. There are so many people in this country that have been impacted by the evils of racism long before the tragic events in Minneapolis and they are using this spotlight to tell their story. It is up to me, and to all of us, to listen to these experiences and use this moment in history to effectuate long-lasting meaningful change in our society.

I have also received emails asking for new regulations for our police in Edison. I will say, unequivocally, that I stand with the great men and women of the Edison Police Department. We have taken great strides in focusing on infusing our department with a diversity that reflects our very diverse community. We have all worked hard to maintain open dialogues with all of our community leaders and, as a result, we have great working relationships and great friendships with these leaders and within the various communities throughout our town.

We take great pride in our department and the men and women who pledged an oath to protect our streets and neighborhoods. Resident safety is our job 24/7 and we have always made that our priority. Our officers are among the best trained in the state, with multiple training sessions throughout the year as mandated through the New Jersey Attorney General’s Office and the Middlesex County Prosecutor’s Office. We are constantly examining best practices adopted by other agencies and our current regulations have even been endorsed by the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police.

The training undertaken by each and every member of the Edison Police Department is extensive and effective in teaching our officers about community policing, fighting against racism, bias management, diversity in policing and proper use of force techniques. We also implemented the use of body-worn cameras a few years ago to not only provide a record of each encounter between law enforcement and the public, but also to help continue to build trust between police and those they have sworn to protect. This body-worn camera footage is reviewed by supervisors and is also used as an additional training tool for our officers.

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These are truly difficult times and we are all experiencing them together. My office has a tremendous working partnership with our police, our fire and all of the first responders serving our community on the front lines. Over the last few months we have all seen what happens when we work together, fighting against the deadly COVID-19. Through social distancing and staying home where possible and generally looking out for each other we have been able to save countless lives.

But the enemy we are confronting now is vastly different. Hundreds of years of racism cannot be wiped out overnight but the peaceful protests, the frank discussions taking place and the voices crying out for change are helping to begin to open lines of communication. I know that for me, it has given me a lot to consider and the conversation has only just begun.”

Thomas Lankey
Mayor