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News from: **Mayor Libby Schaaf**

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Response to assertions that Acting Assistant Chief Downing used insensitive language

Oakland, CA – In mid-2013, then-Deputy Chief Downing participated in a discussion regarding OPD’s crowd management policies and practices. The discussion specifically focused on identifying different force options available to OPD for crowd management during protests. Several participants expressed concern about the use of CS gas (or pepper spray), which is a less-lethal law enforcement tool. Deputy Chief Downing shared his concern that if a tool such as CS was taken away, the Department could be left with methods that no modern-day police force would consider and rhetorically referenced use of such antiquated options such as water hoses.

During a break, one of the meeting attendees pointed out that the reference to water hoses could be perceived as racially insensitive due to their use during civil rights protests; he acknowledged this and did not use this term again. “I did not intend to suggest that such a method would ever be appropriate in Oakland, or any other community, as a legitimate crowd control method,” said Deputy Chief Downing.

News reports have also stated that an assistant from the Court-appointed Monitor was in the room taking notes during the crowd management discussion in 2013. It is important to note that the Monitor concurred with the current management structure of OPD, including having Acting Assistant Chief Downing in charge of Department operations and tactics.

Finally, noted civil rights attorney Jim Chanin, the plaintiff’s counsel in the Riders case, expressed his appreciation for Acting Assistant Chief Downing’s crowd management expertise in a meeting with Mayor Schaaf and City Administrator Landreth last Monday. “I have shared with the Mayor and City Administrator my positive experiences with Chief Downing’s crowd management skills and judgment,” said Chanin.

Mayor Schaaf became aware of this issue on Monday.

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