

Statement from Mayor Dennis McBride

October 7, 2020

Following a thorough review of facts and evidence, Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm has determined that Wauwatosa Police Officer Joseph Mensah was justified in the shooting of Alvin Cole while on duty on February 2, 2020.

This issue has divided Wauwatosa and the greater Milwaukee community. Some will agree with District Attorney Chisholm, and some will not. This debate will not end with today's decision. But it is important to remember that the wheels of government and law will continue to turn. In a democracy, any change must come through the functioning of people elected by the people to serve the people.

I support the Police Department's equity efforts, and I also am working with all City departments to refocus our work and craft policies with an equity lens.

Given recent events in Kenosha, Louisville, and other cities around the country, it should be clear that we all must do everything we can to keep our community peaceful. Violence is not the answer; it only impoverishes communities and brings more pain and despair.

Since mid-July, the Wauwatosa Police Department (WPD), Wauwatosa Fire Department, and Office of Governor Tony Evers have been preparing for the District Attorney's decision. Today I issued an emergency declaration to help ensure everyone's well-being. The WPD will protect the lives and property of all residents and businesses while continuing to protect the constitutional rights of people to engage in peaceful protests.

This is a time for quiet reflection. Regardless of a person's opinion about the District Attorney's decision, the Cole family has lost a son and a brother. Many years ago, on the day that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed, Senator Robert Kennedy, who knew the pain of untimely deaths in his family, called for peace. He said: "What we need in the United States is not division; what we need . . . is not hatred; what we need . . . is not violence or lawlessness; but love and wisdom, and compassion toward one another. . . . We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times; we've had difficult times in the past; we will have difficult times in the future. . . . But the vast majority of white people and . . . black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings who abide in our land. . . . Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people."

I ask all people, regardless of their viewpoints, to remain peaceful and calm as we work our way through this difficult time. We all must keep each other safe.