



# News Release

**Unified Government Public Relations**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Mayor Alvey Creates *Task Force on Community and Police Relations***

*Urges Open, Respectful Dialogue, and Need to Do Better*

Mayor/CEO David Alvey of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County, Kansas City, KS, today announced the creation of a *Task Force on Community and Police Relations* to help guide discussion and advance the dialogue between the community (in particular African American and Hispanic populations) and law enforcement. The Mayor announced the initiative at a 9:00 a.m. press conference this morning in the First-Floor lobby of City Hall, alongside other members of the new Task Force. The group will be co-chaired Unified Government Commissioner Harold Johnson and Mayor Alvey.

“The death of George Floyd evokes a visceral response because it highlights all the pain and tragedy racism causes and has caused for centuries,” said Mayor Alvey when announcing the Task Force. “It challenges each of us to stop and say ‘Enough. We know what we want: a community where every citizen can exercise their right to peaceable assembly, a community where every resident feels valued, and a community where every person sees an officer as a public servant and is not afraid.”

“To create a community and culture that values the life and dignity of every person, it requires people of good will to come together in open and respectful dialogue. We must be willing to talk about hard issues: questions of excessive force, explicit and implicit bias, disparate treatment by law enforcement. We must be willing to listen, and we must be willing to make changes,” Alvey continued. “To that end, I am standing here today with members of the new *Task Force on Community and Police Relations* to build on all the good things we have and recognize all the areas where we need to do better,” said Alvey.

The objective of this Task Force is to build and strengthen trust between the community and law enforcement by identifying issues, perceptions, and challenges to that trust that exist today, creating awareness and providing a vehicle and forum in which these issues can be addressed by law enforcement, local officials, and the community as a whole. “My intent is for law enforcement and local leaders to utilize this to expand education and awareness, review and improve policing policies and procedures, and build trust, interaction, and inclusiveness with all groups and populations in historically diverse Wyandotte County,” stated Alvey.

The Task Force will immediately start coordinating and gathering input and insight from the community on law enforcement perceptions, policies, procedures, and protocols in Wyandotte County, including the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department and the Wyandotte County's Sheriff's Office. The group will identify opportunities and appropriate vehicles to gather community input, collecting, cataloguing, and distributing the information provided with law enforcement leadership, local officials, and the community. It will serve as a conduit of information gathering and dissemination to law enforcement and the Unified Government for review and consideration.

The Task Force will develop and communicate its community input plan quickly, with expectations that this will include expedited public forums, listening sessions, online survey tools, and a variety of other vehicles for the community to participate and share their thoughts.

Once finalized, the Task Force will share a summary of these findings publicly with law enforcement, local officials, and the Unified Government – which will undertake appropriate changes.

The *Task Force on Community and Police Relations* is comprised of community leaders, clergy, students, educators, residents, and representatives of law enforcement. This includes:

- Mayor/CEO David Alvey, Unified Government of Wyandotte County, KCK (co-chair)
- Commissioner Harold Johnson, Unified Government of Wyandotte County, KCK (co-chair)
- Rev. Tony Carter, Jr. Salem Missionary Baptist Church
- Yareli Castor, Student, Donnelly College, KCK resident
- Monsignor Stuart Swetland, President, Donnelly College
- Michael York, Interim Chief of Police, Kansas City, KS Police Department
- Don Ash, Sheriff, Wyandotte County Sheriff's Office
- Evelyn Hill, Community Engagement Director, Avenue of Life\*
- Curtis Smart, M.A. Public Health Administration and KCK Entrepreneur\*
- Maximilian (Max) Mendoza, Executive Director, Heartland 180, Inc.\*

*\*Joined after 6/8/20 press conference*

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