

## **Statement from City Manager Teresa Wilson on 7/11/2016**

I support the actions taken today by Columbia Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins regarding the inappropriate actions of a former Columbia firefighter. As public servants, using the best judgment is paramount at all times. After conferring with Chief Jenkins and members of my management team, a unilateral decision was made earlier today to take swift and appropriate action. It was important for me to receive all necessary information regarding the incident in order to make the best decision on behalf of the City of Columbia.

As the City Manager, there are specific types of behavior and actions that I will not tolerate. Any actions taken to communicate or demonstrate a lack of respect for the lives and safety of others falls into the category of "zero tolerance". Every man and woman who is employed by the City of Columbia is officially an ambassador for the City. Our employees represent the City of Columbia not only while they are in the workplace, but also while they are engaging with others in the community.

There are various references in the City of Columbia's employee handbook regarding behavior, conduct and an employee's role and responsibility when communicating and working with citizens/the public. It is the responsibility of each employee to adhere to these guidelines as outlined. At any time, when these policies are not followed, appropriate actions will be taken. As your civil servants, it is our duty to put the community first at all times. As City of Columbia employees, the personal conduct of staff, even in their own private lives, must be such that it will not reflect negatively on the City or discredit the City or fellow employees.

It is within this context, that I assure each citizen that I will do everything within my level of authority to ensure that these guidelines and policies are followed. I am committed to maintaining a high level of professionalism among our City work force. As we continue to monitor the climate and conditions of current events, I want to commend the many City employees who are maintaining a high level of service delivery. Our public safety staff is on the front lines and they are working diligently.

However through it all, Columbia has been a community that focuses on unity and working together to ensure that our citizens can live in a city that is focused on civility. Civility, respect and professionalism are characteristics that are not only expected, but required of everyone who represents the City of Columbia.

As a whole, our City employees are focused on doing the best job possible for our citizens and this will continue to be our major priority in the days, weeks and months to come. We thank all of our citizens for their love for our City and their commitment to our community.

Yours in service,

City Manager Teresa Wilson