



COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT
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Media Release

INCIDENT: Hickman High School Disturbance on 10.15.08

Press Release 3

This release is to serve as a general explanation for the decision to place Officer Brotemarkle back into the school pending this investigation.

The decision to ultimately have him remain at Hickman during the internal investigation is mine.

It was not reached lightly, and I realize that some in the community are questioning it. It's been asked of me privately as well. It was based on a number of considerations, including some not so obvious to the observer.

School Resource Officers are not the same as regular patrol officers, and are not easily interchanged, based on a number of factors that I will try to explain here.

Police departments in general consider many things when deciding whether to reassign, or place on administrative leave, officers who are under investigation. It's not automatic, and it's on a case by case basis.

In this case, I had to carefully consider a number of things, beginning with the nature of the incident itself, and including the disruption caused by his removal, and with what I concluded was an unwise course to replace him with an untrained (in School Resource duties) patrol officer. I also had to weigh the potential disruption to other schools that placing one of the already assigned SROs at Hickman would cause. That left the last course no SRO at Hickman at all, the least desirable of all scenarios.

There are eight SROs for the entire police department. Each is specially trained, already assigned to a school, and each has ongoing responsibilities in their own schools. They are conducting their own individualized duties, teaching DARE and are heavily invested on a day to day basis. This special training is not possessed by a patrol officer. I had to consider if the disruption caused by Officer Brotemarkle's reassignment outweighed the potential disruption by his return.

In the midst of all this, are the considerations about community expectations and perceptions.

While it may be argued by some that a fair and impartial investigation hinges on appearances projected by his reassignment, I assure you that is not the case. It's not as simple as it appears at first glance. Hopefully that's clearer now. Both his continued service at Hickman and this investigation can co-exist, in my judgment, based on consideration of all the circumstances.

I want to thank the community for their continued support and patience.

Capt. Tom Dresner
Interim Chief of Police

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