



## CHELSEA POLICE DEPARTMENT

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**Edward A. Toth Jr.**  
Chief of Police

EJ, 2-19-2021

### MEDIA RELEASE 02/19/21

The purpose of this release to local media outlets is to correct some of the false information being shared on social media.

During the summer of 2020 a group calling itself the Anti-Racist Chelsea Youth (ARCY) formed and called for protests in Pierce Park and marches, on Main Street (M-52) in the City of Chelsea, MI., in support of Black Lives Matter to bring attention to social injustice and police brutality.

The Chelsea Police Department takes the safety and security of all its citizen very seriously. The point has been made that the CPD has been the only agency in Washtenaw County that has taken enforcement action against protesters marching for this cause. That is because of the frequency of the events and the ARCY group's lack of leadership and organization.

In all the other marches in Washtenaw County a responsible organizer or leader stepped up and worked with the local police agencies to plan a route that both raised awareness to the cause and afforded the police an opportunity to barricade and block streets in order to keep the marchers and motoring public at safe distances from each other.

Several attempts were made by the Chelsea Police Department to speak to members of ARCY or their parents and no one would commit to a route for the march in advance of the actual event. Nor would any adult leader apply for a road closure permit.

*(As a point of reference the City of Chelsea must apply and be granted road closure permits for Main Street {M-52} from the Michigan Department of Transportation for events such as the Chelsea Community Fair Parade and the Memorial Day parade).*

On one occasion the marchers got to the north end of the business district and were arguing amongst themselves, where they should march next. This makes it extremely difficult, dangerous and labor intensive for the police to divert traffic and provide safety for the marchers.

To accomplish this almost weekly feat the Chelsea Police Department used its entire patrol force and had to request mutual aid from the Michigan State Police and the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office to assist.

After the ARCY/BLM march on June 25, 2020, the event turned violent in Pierce Park during an open microphone session. There were two alleged assaults on that occasion. Both assaults were investigated by the Chelsea Police Department and forwarded to the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office for review.

Of the two Pierce Park incidents, prosecution was denied on one case and on the other alleging the assault of a juvenile by an adult, misdemeanor assault charges were authorized and the suspect has been arrested and arraigned.

Another assault was witnessed by officers during the September 4, 2020 when an ARCY/BLM protester struck a Patriot protester. That incident was investigated by the CPD and sent to the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office on September 14, 2020 and is still being reviewed by their office.

At the Chelsea City Council Meeting on July 20, 2020, after seven marches on Main Street (M-52) throughout June and July, 2020 and after the June 25<sup>th</sup> alleged assaults at Pierce Park, Chief Edward A Toth Jr. announced that enforcement action would be undertaken for protesters who chose to march in the street without a permit. He warned that violators would be identified and held responsible for their actions. He and several council members clarified that protesters could utilize Pierce Park to demonstrate, could legally march on the sidewalks, or could pull a permit to march in the street.

The Chelsea Police Department very deliberately and purposely chose the most benign and least severe enforcement option at their disposal—a civil infraction traffic violation under state law for Impeding Traffic. Part of the reasoning for this option was that since youth were involved, this enforcement action was not “criminal” (i.e., a misdemeanor or felony crime) and would not adversely affect the youthful violators being accepted into college or applying for employment in the future.

There were three marches occurring on **July 31, August 13 and September 4, 2020** where enforcement actions were taken. Marchers in violation were identified by investigators using police car video, social media posts, pictures published by local media, videos and still photos of the march and demonstration at the police station.

As a result of the investigation, which took several months, there have been **47** civil infraction tickets issued to **29** individuals **7** of which were juveniles. Of these violations **12** have been adjudicated, **2** were dismissed by the issuing officer (1-was a duplicate violation and 1-was established by investigation to be a case of mistaken identity) and the rest are still in pending in court. The next court hearing for the majority of the violations will be **on Monday February 22, 2021 at 2:00pm** via Zoom in the **14A-3 District Court**, the Honorable Judge Anna Frushour presiding.

On Tuesday February 16, 2021, the City of Chelsea Council met and unanimously adopted a motion *“to recommend on behalf of City Council the Chief of Police to rescind and refund all citations for impeding traffic related to last summer’s protests and call off any further identification of protesters and issuing of future citations thereof.”*

Those violations are still being argued in the 14A-3 District Court.

There are no plans for the Chelsea Police Department to dismiss any of the violations currently before the court. However, no new tickets will be issued from this point forward in regard to these 2020 ARCY/BLM demonstrations.

## The Chelsea Police Mission Statement

Provide quality service to the citizens of our community, while maintaining public trust, protecting the rights of **all** persons while demonstrating professionalism through the development of community partnerships in an effort to reduce criminal activity.