

Police Chief Kenneth Collins issued a statement Thursday in response to actions taken and comments made by members of the Brookhaven Board of Aldermen in recent meetings. Collins spoke on his leadership staff, a Daily Leader opinion column, and the newly-enacted policies for the police department.

When the Board of Aldermen went around an elected chief and fired my Assistant Chief, Clint Earls, they didn't have any cause to fire him. This man had over 30 years of service to our city.

His father first hired me into law enforcement, the late George Earls. I watched tears flow from his mother's eyes for what they did to her son. They gave him an order to be out by 5 p.m., by sundown. When you do a person wrong like that, the God in heaven that I serve will deal with all of you.

Earls wrote grants on his own time, and spent hours and hours of his personal time in hard work, writing grants for the police department. He has brought thousands and thousands of dollars to the department by writing grants. I spoke with him of the vision I had for this city with cameras and the integrated FUSUS system. Once he learned of my vision, he was all-in at that point.

He wrote grants to get us license plate readers. We have one already from his grant, and we're getting two more installed today. These are from the work Asst. Chief Earls did on behalf of this city.

So now I am announcing Detective Penny Banks as my Assistant Chief. She will be the first woman of color in this town's history to hold that position. Chief Arlustra "Pap" Henderson was the first man of color to be the chief and to hold the assistant chief position — a man who is like a father to me.

Det. Jonathan Hart and Det. Tim Sander are my commanders. They will be over the Special Response Team, all training and investigations. They are also now members of a special task force with the Secret Service and the Attorney General's Office. If they complete all the training, the city can get from \$5,000 to \$30,000 worth of equipment free to help out in investigations — so stuff that we would have to send off and possibly pay for, we'll be able to do in-house with this equipment.

If something bad happens, we've got extra resources from the State we can call in from being in this group.

Capt. Tecumseh Warren is over all patrol officers. He's got many faithful years of service. He's also a School Resource Officer for our schools, along with Lt. Willie Gayten. They do a great job and are wonderful people. These two officers work endlessly for the schools and City of Brookhaven to protect our kids and our town. And any time our kids go off on a trip in an area we don't feel comfortable in, they make sure we have enough law enforcement officers on hand to protect our kids and teachers until they get home.

Capt. Michael Harvey is over public service. As well as answering calls and backing up other officers, he is responsible for making sure all funerals, escorts, unlocks, churches, all of this are protected, and schools have extra patrols. He's responsible for all of that, and he does a great job.

Capt. Michael Norris is over night patrol. I've served in the National Guard with this man. I've known this man my whole life. He does a great job, and makes sure all

these areas that need extra patrol are taken care of at night, and he does everything I ask him to do. I'm proud of him.

Lt. Kevin Thompson serves as a supervisor on the day shift. He is responsible for checking and approving all accident reports. He makes sure all of our vehicles and equipment are fixed and maintained. He is instrumental to me because we represent the City of Brookhaven, and we want our vehicles looking good and running good to reflect this beautiful city. He works almost 100 hours every month and doesn't complain. He's dedicated to this department and this community, and he's a real joy to work with.

Cpl. Ashley McDuffee is supervisor over a day shift. She came in, showed all the initiative and leadership qualities, and she does a great job. I've hired more women than the city ever had because I feel like if you pass the training, you deserve the job. Thank you, Ashley, and all the ladies that work so hard for me and this city at the department. I appreciate you all.

Sgt. Lisa Jackson and Sgt. Reggie Cain are the supervisors over one of the night shifts. They do a great job. When they get on something, they are relentless and they play an important part in keeping the city safe each and every night. One of the young officers who is about to graduate today, Officer Vincent Brown, will be placed in the care of Sgt. Cain and Sgt. Jackson to finish his training on the streets. His grandfather is the retired Capt. Louis Calcote, keeping the tradition of law enforcement in the family, and we thank him for his service.

Det. Leslie Falvey has just come on to the department, and he is already making a difference. He is quiet, he stays to himself, but he's always working. He can't sleep; he's up all night thinking about these cases and working on them. I want to thank him for helping keep our city safe.

Det. Vincent Fernando helps out as bailiff, responsible for the security of the City Court. He's also responsible for making sure the inmates get medical care, taking them back-and-forth to the hospital. He also helps out with juvenile investigations. We brought back retired Capt. Roger Wilson for extra security for our judge and our courts, and we thank him for his lifelong service. (Buck, we love you.)

And I would like to thank Sgt. Bobby Hawthorn, as well as all of my patrolmen who come here everyday, and answer over 2,000 calls regularly, every couple of weeks, nonstop — unlocks, jump offs, and we provide that service free of charge and it gets to be hectic, but we want the citizens to know we do the best we can because we love Brookhaven so we provide these services free of charge. It's not about just arresting people, it's about service also — we protect and serve. And I want to thank all of my officers for the great job they do everyday. Sometimes it seems like an impossible task, but we do our best.

Most of all, I would like to thank Shauntinae Smith, my administrative assistant. She has a never-ending job of keeping us current with PERS, with public safety, and she has to keep up with everybody's certificates, and also has to keep up with the time our officers work, as well as background checks for health care field, and all these other agencies. I don't know how she does it all and keeps up with it, but she does a great job.

These people are priceless. They keep this city safe each and every day, and when all hell breaks loose, these are the people that I call in.

I'm planning on retiring, and I had told the Mayor and these aldermen, in June 2025, not seeking another term. They are aware of this.

This Board is doing things that I've never seen done before. They are going around an elected chief and firing his staff. If you make them angry, if you don't do what they want, they are going to try their best to terminate you or do something to you. I want to warn Hunter Cloud that if they haven't already, some of them will come after you also, because my officers who are loyal to me are facing some of the same things. I want to tell Hunter that you are a journalist. Your job is to tell the truth, and to tell it the way you see it, whether it is about me or anybody else, you have freedom of speech.

I don't know you personally, but what I want to tell you is, if you are being harassed or mistreated, you call me and I'll do everything in my power to put charges on these individuals. Hunter, everything you said in that article is true. You keep telling the truth and you keep exercising your First Amendment right, whether it's for me or against me, and I will defend you with my life.

We have in this city some good elected officials, some who know what's going on is wrong, but they don't have the votes. A group took your right to vote away when we were celebrating Black History Month. What a slap in the face to all the people who have died for this right, all the women who have died, people of color, who took abuse, were lynched for this right, and they took your right during Black History Month. That hurts me more than anything in the world.

They brought Mr. William Harmening in to write policy to give them authority over the police department. He's done his job and they passed these policies and procedures and I wish you could see them. All I can say is 'Wow.'

The mayor and the board of aldermen are running the police department now. That's a further disrespect of your right to vote. It's not about Chief Collins anymore. This is way bigger than me.

All I can tell the mayor and Board of Aldermen is be careful what you wish for. God made you the shepherds to protect this flock, and what do y'all do? Y'all know better than what God had chosen. What you all fail to realize is first of all, I was elected to chief by the grace of God and the will of the voters of this city. I didn't elect myself.

And when God gets finished with y'all, amen.

Separation of powers in day-to-day operations.

Chief Kenneth Collins