

**AGENDA**  
**POLICE MERIT COMMISSION**  
**Monday, July 12, 2021 9:00 a.m.**  
**Council Chambers**

Municipal Building, 229 S. Second Street, Elkhart, IN 46516  
<https://coei.webex.com/coei/j.php?MTID=mb128c6d7af1551fd1d47eb3d1804c447>  
Meeting Number 172 306 2591  
Password Police21

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Roll call**
- 3. Approve Agenda**
- 4. Minutes- Regular Meeting June 14, 2021 & Special Meeting June 24, 2021**
- 5. Police Department**
  - Retirement- Cpl. Dennis Russell
  - Resignation- Ptl. Landon Vargo
  - Commendations- Det. Brandon Roundtree, Cpl. Chris Bella  
Cpl. Drew Neese, Cpl. Davin Hackett, Ptl. Emily Lamkin,  
Cpl. John Carver, Ptl. Troy Gray
- 6. Public Participation**
- 7. Adjournment**

POLICE MERIT COMMISSION  
Monday, June 14, 2021

President James Rieckhoff called a meeting of the Police Merit Commission to order at 9:00 a.m., Monday, June 14, 2021. Clerk of the Commission Nancy Wilson called the role. Commissioners James Rieckhoff, Thomas Barber, Clifton Hildreth, and Brad Billings attended in person. Jean Mayes was absent at roll call and joined the meeting in progress on WebEx.

1. PMC RESOLUTION 21-R-01

On motion by Brad Billings, seconded by Thomas Barber and carried 4-0, the Police Merit Commission (PMC) adopted Resolution 21-R-01, a Resolution establishing the Policy by which members of the Police Merit Commission may participate by electronic means of communication.

2. APPROVE AGENDA

On motion by Brad Billings, seconded by Clifton Hildreth and carried 4-0, the agenda was approved as presented.

3. MINUTES- May 24, 2021

On motion by Clifton Hildreth, seconded by Thomas Barber and carried 4-0, the minutes from May 24, 2021 were approved as presented.

4. POLICE DEPARTMENT

Captain Steve Price presented a Change of Status for seven Officers who completed their first year of service. Nathaniel Toth, Seth Youngblood, Bryce Moore, Anthony Reese, Gavin Headley, Kristopher Kreager, and Derek Heign changed rank from 4<sup>th</sup> class Patrolman P-1 to 3<sup>rd</sup> class P-2. Jim Rieckhoff accepted the notification.

Captain Price notified the Commissioners that Ptl. Troy Gray resigned effective May 31, 2021. On motion by Brad Billings, seconded by Thomas Barber and carried 5-0, the Police Merit Commission (PMC) accepted the resignation of Ptl. Troy Gray. Nancy noted for the record that Commissioner Jean Mayes joined the meeting on WebEx.

Captain Price presented a Disciplinary Notice for Ptl. Jordan Sears. On May 28, 2021 the Chief's Review Board conducted a review of the crash that occurred on May 17, 2021 and found the crash to be chargeable. The Chief agreed and took the action of a five-day suspension without pay, loss of take home vehicle for 30 calendar days, and remedial EVOC training with Sgt. Odle. Jim Rieckhoff noted this discipline falls within the Chief's discretion and accepted the discipline for the record.

Captain Price presented a Change of Status Promotion for Acting Lt. Travis Snider. Lt. Snider interviewed for the position of Lt. of the Uniform Division Patrol. On motion by Clifton Hildreth, seconded by Jean Mayes and carried 5-0, the PMC promoted Lt. Travis Snider to probationary Lieutenant of the Uniform Division Patrol effective May 6, 2021.

Captain Price presented a Joint Motion to Continue the hearings for Cpl. Taryn Lanzen and Sgt. Nathan Lanzen. On motion by Jean Mayes, seconded by Clifton Hildreth and carried 5-0, the PMC continued the hearing date for Cpl. Taryn Lanzen to July 15, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. in the City Council Chambers. On motion by Clifton Hildreth, seconded by Brad Billings and carried 5-0, the PMC continued the hearing for Sgt. Nathan Lanzen to July 19, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. in the City Council Chambers.

POLICE MERIT COMMISSION  
Monday, June 14, 2021

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POLICE MERIT COMMISSION  
Monday, June 14, 2021

5. ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Brad Billings, seconded by Clifton Hildreth and carried 5-0, the City of Elkhart, Indiana Police Merit Commission was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.

\_\_\_\_\_ James Rieckhoff, President

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ Clifton Hildreth, Secretary

STATE OF INDIANA            )           ELKHART CITY POLICE MERIT COMMISSION  
  ) SS:  
COUNTY OF ELKHART        )

IN RE THE MATTER OF:    )  
  )  
JONATHAN BELMAREZ        )

**DECISION**

Commission President James Rieckhoff called a special meeting of the Police Merit Commission to order at 9:00 a.m., Thursday, June 24, 2021. Clerk of the Commission Nancy Wilson called the roll. Commissioners James Rieckhoff, Clifton Hildreth, and Thomas Barber attended in person. Commissioner Jean Mayes attended on WebEx. Commissioner Brad Billings was absent, his presence having been previously excused.

The purpose of the Special Meeting was to consider written allegations made by Police Chief Kris Seymore that Patrolman Jonathan Belmarez had engaged in conduct constituting neglect of duty (as used in Ind. Code 36-8-3.5-17(b)(2)(A)). The allegations at the base of the charge were as follows:

1. On December 11, 2020, Patrolman Belmarez did not have certain assigned equipment in his vehicle when he was dispatched to a call, which delayed his arrival to the call, and had not checked that equipment, which failed to function properly when it was deployed. In addition, his body camera did not record video of the incident to which he was dispatched.
2. On December 13, Patrolman Belmarez failed to complete a supplemental report after he witnessed a subject in possession of marijuana, collected the marijuana as evidence, and turned it over to another officer, later claiming ignorance of the policy requirement to make such a report.
3. On January 26, 2021, Patrolman Belmarez made a mistake in completing an accident report by listing an incorrect vehicle as involved and failed to correct the mistake timely after it was called to his attention.
4. On January 14, 2021, Patrolman Belmarez was placed on Administrative Leave and thus required to turn in equipment which had been issued to him, including a Daniel Defense Rifle, which he had stored at his home rather than having it in his squad car.

The Chief's recommendation was that if the Commission found Patrolman Schwartz guilty of the charge, his employment with the City of Elkhart Police Department should be terminated.

At the hearing Chief Seymore appeared in person with legal counsel Rose Rivera. Patrolman Belmarez appeared in person with legal counsel Andrew Duncan.

Both counsel made opening statements setting forth their views of the evidence to be presented. Chief Seymore then presented three witnesses, namely, Lieutenant Karl Miller, Detective James

Anderson, and himself, who testified as to the allegations. Patrolman Belmarez presented as witnesses for him Lieutenant Laura Koch, Sergeants Dan Jones and Jason Ray, and Patrolmen Adam Northcutt and Clay Martin. He also testified on his own behalf. Each Commissioner was given the opportunity to question each witness, although few such questions were asked.

Following the completion of the examination of witnesses, both counsel made final arguments. Ms. Rivera argued that Patrolman Belmarez had demonstrated uncorrected weaknesses which made him a liability to the department. Mr. Duncan argued that termination was too great a sanction and there were measures short of termination the City could take to remedy the situation.

After the arguments were completed, the President declared a recess and the Commissioners present retired to a private room to review the evidence, with Commissioner Mayes present through a FaceTime call. After deliberations were completed, the Commissioners returned to the Hearing Room, with Commissioner Mayes again present by WebEx. The hearing was again called to order. The parties and their counsel were again present.

Two motions were presented as follows:

Commissioner Thomas Barber moved that the Commission find that Patrolman Belmarez had engaged in conduct constituting Neglect of Duty. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Jean Mayes. The Clerk conducted a roll-call vote. The motion carried by a vote of 4 in favor and none opposed. The motion was therefore carried.

Commissioner Clifton Hildreth then moved that the Commission terminate Patrolman Belmarez from his employment as an Elkhart Police Officer. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Jean Mayes. The Clerk conducted a roll-call vote. The motion carried by a vote of 4 in favor and none opposed. The motion was therefore carried.

Date: June 24, 2021

\_\_\_\_\_  
James Rieckhoff, President  
Elkhart City Police Merit Commission

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ Clifton Hildreth, Secretary

Rod Roberson  
Mayor

Kris Seymore  
Chief



Police Department  
175 Waterfall Dr.  
Elkhart, IN 46516

574.295.7070  
Fax: 574.293.0679

July 7, 2021

Police Merit Commission  
Municipal Building  
229 S. Second Street  
Elkhart, IN 46516


RE: Retirement  
Corporal Dennis Russell #349

Dear Commissioners:

Cpl. Dennis Russell submitted a letter indicating his intent to retire from the Elkhart Police Department effective July 9, 2021. Cpl. Russell was hired on May 22, 2001 and upon his retirement, he will have served as an officer with our department just over twenty years. Dennis has been offered a position with the City Forestry Division. He will begin his new position on July 12, 2021.

Since 2009 he has held the position of Animal Control Officer, where he handled the many challenges and responsibilities he faced with both professionalism and compassion. We thank him for his service to our department and the Elkhart Community. He will be greatly missed.

Respectfully,

  
Kris Seymore  
Chief of Police

KS/kae

c: Personnel File  
Payroll



Rod Roberson  
Mayor

Kris Seymore  
Chief



Police Department  
175 Waterfall Dr.  
Elkhart, IN 46516

574.295.7070  
Fax: 574.293.0679

July 8, 2021

Police Merit Commission  
Municipal Building  
229 S. Second Street  
Elkhart, IN 46516

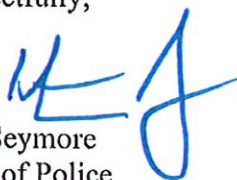
RE: Resignation  
Ptl. Landon Vargo #472

Dear Commissioners:

First Class Patrolman Landon Vargo submitted his resignation on June 25, 2021. His last official day serving the Elkhart Police Department was July 3, 2021.

Ptl. Vargo joined the department on April 23, 2018 and earned the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Class Patrolman this April. His wife has accepted a position with the Department of Defense and they will be relocating to Indianapolis. It is a loss for the Elkhart Police Department but we wish him well and much success in his new endeavor. At this time I ask that you please accept his resignation.

Respectfully,

  
Kris Seymore  
Chief of Police

Cc: Personnel File  
Payroll



Police Administration

**COMMENDATION**



TO: Detective Brandon Roundtree  
FROM: Administration  
DATE: July 7, 2021  
RE: Actions While Off-Duty on September 15, 2020

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Police Administration was made aware of your actions during the following event and we wish to personally commend and recognize you for your outstanding police work and your dedicated service to the Elkhart Community:

*On September 15, 2020, while working off-duty employment for Elkhart County Juvenile Community Corrections, Detective Brandon Roundtree was conducting a home visit in Goshen, Indiana. Upon arrival and exiting his vehicle he heard possible gunshots in the area, but was unable to establish the exact location. Detective Roundtree next witnessed several subjects arguing at a residence several houses from his location. Detective Roundtree saw one of the subjects carrying what appeared to be a handgun enter a vehicle parked close by. Moments later he saw that same male on foot go to the rear of the house and observed an argument. He then witnessed the subject was approaching a female seated in a vehicle, at which point Det. Roundtree visually confirmed the subject was concealing a handgun in his waistband. Det. Roundtree, being off duty at the time, quickly contacted the Communications Center to advise his location and to notify the Goshen Police Department of this situation and to make sure they were aware of his presence before approaching the disturbance. As he approached to make contact a Goshen Police Department officer was arriving on scene, at which point Det. Roundtree ran towards the officer yelling that the male subject had a gun. While the Goshen officer was attempting to secure him the subject resisted and reached for the area of his waistband. Det. Roundtree was able to assist in gaining control and securing the subject in handcuffs.*

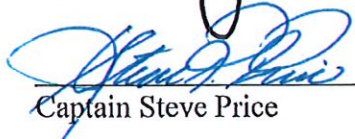
*The investigation by the Goshen Police Department determined that shots had been fired during a domestic altercation and the suspect was in fact in possession of a concealed weapon. The suspect was arrested for battering his wife and a male victim with a firearm.*

This letter of commendation is in recognition of your diligent observation, presence of mind and sound actions to intervene with a violent domestic altercation, resulting in the apprehension of the suspect. Your actions, along with the Goshen Police Department, helped mitigate an incident of domestic violence from escalating into what could have easily become a deadly encounter. Your actions reflect highly upon the Elkhart Police Department and the law enforcement profession. Congratulations on a job well done.

Respectfully,


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Kris Seymore

  
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Assistant Chief Chris Snyder

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Steve Price

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Jeff Eaton

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Dan Milanese

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Bryan Moore

KS/ke



Police Administration

**COMMENDATION**



TO: Corporal Chris Bella  
FROM: Administration  
DATE: July 7, 2021  
RE: Appreciation from Elkhart Community


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The Elkhart Police Administration was made aware of your actions during the following event and we wish to personally commend and recognize you for your outstanding police work and your dedicated service to the Elkhart Community:

*Last October Corporal Chris Bella responded to a call at Oaklawn Psychiatric Center Elkhart location in their Addictions Department. We were contacted thorough our 311 System by Cheri Littlefield from Oaklawn praising Corporal Bella for his actions when he responded to a call handling a high risk client of theirs. She described him doing a great job using trauma informed language when speaking with the client and escorting the client to the hospital. She went on to say that these situations can be challenging to navigate and that he did very well. They are acknowledging Corporal Bella for doing an amazing job of helping them out with an emergent situation and they appreciate the professionalism and care that he offered in their time of need.*


This letter of commendation is in recognition in the manner in which you handled this situation that could have become extremely challenging, as Ms. Littlefield stated. Applying your specialized training along with your professionalism, presence of mind and compassion made for a smooth sequence of events between yourself, the client and Oaklawn Psychiatric Center. We are very proud to receive this kind of positive feedback that reflects so highly upon yourself, as well as the Elkhart Police Department as a whole. Congratulations and thank you on a job well done.

Respectfully,



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Chief Kris Seymore



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Captain Steve Price



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Captain Dan Milanese



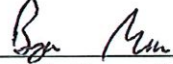
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Assistant Chief Chris Snyder



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Captain Jeff Eaton



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Captain Bryan Moore

KS/ke

Police Administration

**COMMENDATION**



TO: Corporal Drew Neese #390  
FROM: Administration  
DATE: July 7, 2021  
RE: Above and Beyond Duty


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The Elkhart Police Administration was made aware of your actions during the following event and we wish to personally commend and recognize you for your outstanding police work and your dedicated service to the Elkhart Community:

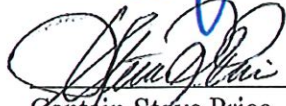
*In October 2020 patrol officers responded to a call in reference to a suicidal male parked in his vehicle armed with a handgun. Upon arriving on scene Cpl. Neese was able to talk back and forth with the individual through the open vehicle window, and eventually talking with him on his cell phone. The male stated that he felt he had no use or purpose in life and just wanted to die and that he was either going to shoot himself or point an unloaded gun at police, making the police shoot him. After nearly a half hour Cpl. Neese was able to convince the male to leave the gun in the truck, step out of the truck and surrender to him. Cpl. Neese stayed on the phone with him as he was surrendering until he was close enough to speak with him in person.*

This letter of commendation is in recognition in the manner in which you handled this incident; your ability to make a connection, talking him into surrendering and de-escalating this situation in what could have been his loss of life. The outcome could have been devastating. You displayed incredible leadership. Please continue to be an example to your fellow officers and keep up the great work. Your actions reflect highly upon the Elkhart Police Department and the law enforcement profession. We are proud to recognize you Corporal Neese and to work alongside you. Congratulations and thank you on a job well done.

Respectfully,

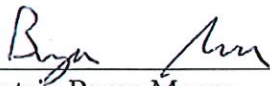
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Kris Seymore

  
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Assistant Chief Chris Snyder

  
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Captain Steve Price

  
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Captain Jeff Eaton

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Dan Milanese

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Bryan Moore

KS/ke



Police Administration

**COMMENDATION**



TO: Corporal Davin Hackett #457  
FROM: Administration  
DATE: July 8, 2021  
RE: Above and Beyond Duty

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The Elkhart Police Administration was made aware of your actions involving your actions while helping someone awhile back. We wish to personally commend and recognize you for going above and beyond and demonstrating compassion to a fellow citizen of our Elkhart Community.

*Last November the Osolo Township Trustees Office reached out to make us aware of your actions while assisting a man in need. They explained that after an individual was discharged from the hospital he found that his money had been stolen from his bank account and could not pay for his rent or utilities. He was in danger of being evicted and utilities of being disconnected. This gentleman did not have a phone or any transportation and you were kind enough to make phone calls for him to find him the help he so desperately needed, ultimately taking him to the Osolo Township Trustees Office to get him the assistance he needed. They said that this gentleman made a comment to them saying, "He didn't know what he would do without Officer Hackett; he has done more for me than anybody."*

This letter of commendation is to recognize you for going above and beyond in getting this man the help he needed. You saw a need and followed through, taking the time necessary. Your empathy, compassion and selflessness that was shown by you are traits of what the Elkhart Police Department wants to emulate towards the citizens we serve in our community.


Your actions reflect highly upon the Elkhart Police Department and the law enforcement profession. We are proud to recognize you Corporal Hackett and to work alongside you. Congratulations on a job well done!



Respectfully,

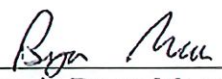
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Kris Seymore

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant Chief Chris Snyder

  
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Captain Steve Price

  
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Captain Jeff Eaton

  
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Captain Dan Milanese

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Bryan Moore

KS/ke

Police Administration

**COMMENDATION**



TO: Ptl. Emily Lamkin #470  
FROM: Administration  
DATE: July 7, 2021  
RE: Above and Beyond Duty

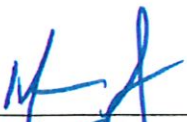
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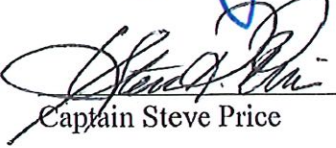
*In March 2021 Ptl. Lamkin responded to an unresponsive medical assistance call at The Artisan restaurant on S. Main Street, where a male had been found unconscious and not breathing in the restroom; CPR was in progress from one of the patrons at the restaurant. Officer Lamkin quickly arrived and entered the establishment moving through the chaos of multiple people to the unconscious male, staying outwardly calm and collected while she assisted with removing several patrons from the tight area, at which point she quickly assessed the scene and took control of the situation and began to administer CPR without hesitation. Officer Lamkin declined multiple offers for relief from fellow officers and remained consistent and steadfast until she was relieved by EFD medics. Due to her quick actions and continuous effort during CPR they were able to regain a pulse; he was quickly transported to Elkhart General Hospital for further life saving measures. Her unwavering dedication and determination to save this man's life was readily displayed by her actions.*

This letter of commendation is in recognition in the manner in which you handled this incident; your ability to take control, assess the situation and immediately, without hesitation, take action in rendering aid to save a man's life. Please continue to be an example to your fellow officers and keep up the great work. Your actions reflect highly upon the Elkhart Police Department and the law enforcement profession. We are proud to recognize you Officer Lamkin and to work alongside you. Congratulations and thank you on a job well done.

Respectfully,

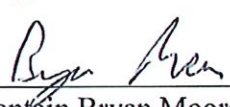
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Kris Seymore

  
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Assistant Chief Chris Snyder

  
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Captain Steve Price

  
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Captain Jeff Eaton

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Dan Milanese

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Bryan Moore

KS/ke



Police Administration

**COMMENDATION**



TO: Cpl. John Carver #422  
FROM: Administration  
DATE: July 7, 2021  
RE: Above and Beyond Duty

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The Elkhart Police Administration was made aware of your actions during the following event and we wish to personally commend and recognize you for your outstanding police work and your dedicated service to the Elkhart Community:

*In April 2021 officers responded to a call in reference to a shooting victim with injuries. Cpl. Carver was the second officer to arrive on scene of a five year old boy that had been accidentally shot by a six year old boy while both were playing with a gun. Upon arrival the mother and the uncle were rendering aid, both in a state of panic. Cpl. Carver was able to ignore the chaos, access the wounds and immediately started administering life saving techniques on the five year old victim. The boy was semi-conscious and in a great deal of pain. He applied a compression bandage on the wound, while talking and comforting the young boy, keeping him awake until the Elkhart Fire Department paramedics arrived on scene and took over his care. As paramedics were loading the victim for transport Cpl. Carver continued to assist by providing information about his wounds, type and caliber of the firearm, all vital information for his future treatment. The young boy was transported directly to Memorial Hospital to then be flown to Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis. EFD medics communicated that due to Cpl. Carver's actions at the scene, paramedics were able to immediately transport the victim and that although he was in serious condition he would survive. It was confirmed by both the fire chief and physician that Cpl. Carver's actions more than likely saved the boy's life.*

Recently Cpl. Carver had attended an advanced firearms training course in New Mexico. He personally paid for the course, the airfare and used his own vacation time in order to attend. Along with the firearms training he was also taught life saving techniques for serious trauma, specifically treating gunshot wounds. At this training he was given an "Israeli" compression

bandage that he carried on duty; this bandage was the very one that he used to save this young boy's life. Cpl. Carver is a Field Training Officer and on this day he was training a new officer when they responded to the shooting call. While preparing for his arrival to the scene he continued to provide instruction to the officer he was training. Body camera footage shows him holding the bandage in his hand prior to his arrival, opening the bandage as he runs up to the residence.

Cpl. Carver's willingness to seek out specialized training at his own expense in order to better serve the citizens, his dedication to the Elkhart Police Department and his actions saving this young boy's life go above and beyond the normal call of duty. His training, quick actions and calm professionalism during a chaotic and traumatic event are to be commended.


This letter of commendation is in recognition in the manner in which you handled this incident; your ability to take control, assess the situation and immediately, without hesitation, take action in rendering aid to save a life. Please continue to be an example to your fellow officers and keep up the great work. Your actions reflect highly upon the Elkhart Police Department and the law enforcement profession. We are proud to recognize you Cpl. Carver and to work alongside you. Congratulations and thank you on a job well done.

Respectfully,



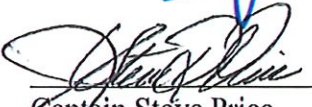
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Chief Kris Seymore



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Assistant Chief Chris Snyder




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Captain Steve Price



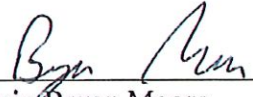
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Captain Jeff Eaton



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Captain Dan Milanese



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Captain Bryan Moore

KS/ke

Police Administration

**COMMENDATION**



TO: Ptl. Troy Gray #471  
FROM: Administration  
DATE: July 7, 2021  
RE: Above and Beyond Duty

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The Elkhart Police Administration was made aware of your actions during the following event and we wish to personally commend and recognize you for your outstanding police work and your dedicated service to the Elkhart Community:


*In May 2021 Ptl. Gray was dispatched to a gas station in reference to a female unconscious and not breathing. Upon arrival Ptl. Gray located the female sitting in a vehicle. At that point Ptl. Gray placed the female, who was turning blue and not breathing or conscious, on a flat surface outside the vehicle. He assessed her condition and immediately started CPR completing six rounds before the medic units arrived. After medics took over CPR he could then collect information to assist the medics in what took place. The Elkhart Fire Department Medics, other Fire Department personnel and EGH physician, Dr. Quiring, stated without the quick thinking and response from Ptl. Gray she may have succumbed to her injuries.*

This letter of commendation is in recognition in the manner in which you handled this incident; your ability to stay calm and level headed, taking control accessing the situation and immediately take action in rendering aide to save a life. Your actions reflect highly upon the Elkhart Police Department and the law enforcement profession. We are happy to recognize you and were proud to work alongside you. Congratulations and thank you on a job well done.


Respectfully,



  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Kris Seymore

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant Chief Chris Snyder

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Steve Price

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Jeff Eaton

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Dan Milanese

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain Bryan Moore

KS/ke