

Village Alert

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Message from Village President Burke

Dear Olympia Fields Residents:

Once again it has come to our attention that an article, this time from the South Suburban News, has falsely disparaged the Village of Olympia Fields, a member of our police department, and me. We need to set the record straight.

On the front page is a by-line "Did Olympia Fields Mayor Sterling Burke Cover up assault on student?" The article suggested that Olympia Fields is corrupt and that the police department leadership cannot be trusted. The article also suggests that I covered up an assault by one of our officers of a 14 year old student. The incident occurred in May, 2018. At the time, the officer was off-duty, working as a security guard at Rich Central High School. The article potentially erodes confidence in our brand, police department and our standing in the southern suburbs.

The allegations are false. Shortly after the incident, the Village thoroughly investigated the matter. We determined that the off-duty officer did nothing wrong. We had video from 2 hallway cameras and a cell phone. He was alone attempting to breakup a fight between 2 females and was surrounded by 30 to 40 students. Some were inciting the fight and others were trying to help break it up. He was doing his job as an off duty security officer for Rich Central.

The facts are:

1. The off-duty officer was head of security. Just about every Village police officer has worked in security in the Rich HS system. None work there today.
2. He was off duty and not operating in any capacity of the Village of Olympia Fields.
3. The school district did their own investigation, cleared him of any wrongdoing and retained the officer until he retired from the School District a year later.
4. It was also determined that the alleged victim was not even enrolled in Rich Central. She was trespassing.
5. There were no formal charges filed against the off-duty officer.

6. The village was not liable in any way.

7. It was determined and agreed that the village should not be involved in any way. If anything, it was a civil issue. There have been no new developments in nearly three years.

The Village Attorney prepared a three-page summary memo dated June 11, 2018. Here are his conclusions:

This incident does not expose the Village of Olympia Fields to potential liability. The conduct of [the off-duty officer] was clearly in his capacity as an employee of S.D. 227...Based on all of the circumstances, I do not believe that the force used by [the off-duty officer] was unreasonable or excessive. I certainly do not view this conduct as criminal in nature.

As you can see, the School District exonerated the off-duty officer. There was no cover-up by the Village. There was no reason for the Village to cover-up anything because the Village had no responsibility over this incident.. There was no reason for the Village to apologize to anyone. There was no wrongdoing.

These are the facts. The false accusations in the article have done a terrible disservice to a dedicated police officer, and have stained the wonderful reputation of our village.

Sterling Burke
Village President
Village of Olympia Fields

Village of Olympia Fields

20040 Governors Highway

Olympia Fields, IL 60461

708-503-8000

olympia-fields.com