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Last week we heard the rhetoric from Mayor Young and Police Commissioner Harrison with regard to improvements in the area of recruitment and retention. Unfortunately, once again, it falls upon our union to correct the falsehoods presented by the Mayor and Commissioner. Last week, Commissioner Harrison told the media that “Officer retention is also at the highest level in 20 years”. This is not accurate! In the first two months of 2020, the Baltimore Police Department hired 41 trainees and lost 70 officers to either retirement, or “I quit”, or “I’ve had enough of being under attack from my own department”, or “I’m going elsewhere for better pay and working conditions”. In both January and February of this year, the attrition numbers were some of the highest in the last 20 years. This type of false narrative is extremely frustrating to FOP#3 and we cannot understand why some in power in Baltimore continually accept these comments from the Police Commissioner as truth.

In fact, the opposite is true. On July 1, 2020, the first of those officers who were betrayed by the City in 2010 will be eligible for retirement. These are the officers who were hired under a 20-year retirement system, until 2010 when the disastrous administration of former Mayor Rawlings Blake changed the longevity requirement to 25 years. Those members who were forced to stay the additional five years will be eligible to leave in July and we are assured that many of them are planning to do so. As a result, we anticipate that those numbers will be added to the 15-35 men and women that we are already losing each month.

We continually hear the Mayor and Commissioner say that our pay rate is competitive with surrounding jurisdictions and, yes, for the first few years of employment, that is correct. After that, however, our pay rate drops off between \$20,000 - \$30,000 less than surrounding jurisdictions and we become far less than competitive. Prospective recruits are aware of this fact and are, more often than not, driven to those police departments once they have been trained by the BPD. In addition, Baltimore remains the most violent city in the nation and working here is difficult, at best. Add to that the total lack of support for our officers along with the miserable working conditions, and it is easy to see why we cannot recruit or retain, despite all endeavors.

There is no group of people more vested in a positive renewal of the BPD than our union members. It is both our livelihood, and our lives, that are at stake and we are as anxious for success as much as the City’s leadership. We also know that success is the result of action not words, and truth not lies. At this point, we remain hopeful but have seen zero sign of any significant change.

Mike Mancuso