



## COMMISSIONERS OF RIDGELY

John Hurley, Commissioner  
Leonard Buckle, Commissioner  
Brad Sears, Commissioner

### STATEMENT REGARDING RIDGELY POLICE DEPARTMENT September 9, 2024

On February 23, 2024, the Office of the State Prosecutor (the “OSP”) initiated an investigation into the Ridgely Police Department (the “RPD”). According to the OSP’s July 25, 2024, Report of Investigation, the investigation was initiated by the Caroline County State’s Attorney and was related to suspected violations of perjury and misconduct in office. Pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Criminal Procedure § 14-107, the OSP is charged with investigating, among other things, offenses constituting criminal malfeasance, misfeasance, or nonfeasance in office committed by an officer or employee of a political subdivision of the State, including officers and employees of the Town of Ridgely (the “Town”).

The investigation was not initiated by, or with the knowledge of, the Commissioners of Ridgely (the “Commissioners”) or Town staff. On August 14, 2024, in response to the Commissioners’ Public Information Act request, the OSP provided a redacted copy of its July 25<sup>th</sup> Report to the Town, and the same is attached to this Statement. OSP’s investigations are confidential, and very few details are typically shared with the political subdivision being investigated. The Town cannot provide any details regarding the OSP’s investigation other than what is set forth in the redacted report.

On March 11, 2024, the Commissioners and Town staff were presented with information pertaining to the alleged violations in two separate closed session meetings.

On March 12, 2024, the Caroline County Sheriff’s Office (the “Sheriff”) executed a search and seizure warrant issued by the Circuit Court for Caroline County, Maryland for the RPD. The Sheriff conducted a thorough search of the RPD and seized several items and records. The materials taken were turned over to the OSP. Additionally, on March 12, 2024, the Commissioners were directed to order all RPD officers to surrender their police firearms, MPCTC cards, vehicles, and other equipment to the Town. Pursuant to those actions, and as noted in a statement of the Commissioners issued on March 13, 2024, the entire RPD was suspended with pay, effective immediately, pending the OSP’s investigation.

On March 18, 2024, the Commissioners entered into a temporary agreement with the Sheriff and the County Commissioners of Caroline County, Maryland (the “County”) pursuant to which the Sheriff would provide regular law enforcement services within the Town. The purpose of the temporary agreement was to ensure that the Town’s public safety services would be met pending the RPD’s suspension.

On May 6, 2024, the Commissioners voted to extend the agreement with the Sheriff and the County through the 2025 fiscal year, from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025 (“FY25”). The Commissioners also voted to appropriate the Town’s law enforcement services budget for FY25 to the Sheriff in lieu of funding a Town police force. Under the agreement as amended, the Sheriff is currently providing the Town with two uniformed deputies and one uniformed Sergeant on a full-time basis.

The Commissioners recognize the pain this unfortunate situation has caused their friends and neighbors in the Town. At the same time, the Commissioners are pleased that most of the former RPD employees have secured employment elsewhere. Thus, the Commissioners realize that those employees would be unlikely to return to their former positions even if those positions were available. Accordingly, the Commissioners have been pleased thus far with the law enforcement services provided by the Sheriff under the current agreement. The agreement is subject to renewal on an annual basis and may be terminated by any party with 30 days' prior written notice; however, the Commissioners recognize that reestablishing the RPD would be a complex and expensive undertaking. Such an effort would require a high level of citizen support (not just political support) for operating the RPD and a commitment to funding and seeing the process through. Accordingly, the Commissioners believe that it is in the best interest of the Town to continue the present arrangement with the Sheriff and the County through at least FY25 and to reevaluate the Sheriff's engagement when preparing the FY26 budget.

This statement serves as the final comments from the Commissioners and the Town regarding this matter. Neither the Commissioners nor any Town staff will comment further upon the status of the former RPD employees or the OSP's investigation.