



MEDIA RELEASE

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City of Burlington Announces Newly Appointed Interim Police Chief

Burlington, NC – The City of Burlington is pleased to announce that Eric Kerns has been appointed Interim Police Chief for the City of Burlington, effective May 27, 2021. He will begin working alongside retiring Chief Jeff Smythe beginning May 17, 2021 to ensure a smooth transition of leadership in the Burlington Police Department.

Kerns is no stranger to the Burlington Police Department or the City of Burlington. In 2018, he retired with 30 years of exemplary service from the Burlington Police Department and has been a lifelong resident of Burlington. Kerns is currently employed with the Burlington Police Department as a part-time employee assisting with Accreditation and continues to serve on the departmental budget team.

Kerns graduated Western Alamance High School in 1984. In 1988 he graduated the University of North Carolina Charlotte with a Bachelor of Science in Criminology and a minor in Sociology. In 2008, he obtained Master of Business Administration degree with a concentration in Leadership from Pfeiffer University and graduated the Administrative Officers Management Program at North Carolina State University.

Kerns began his career with the Burlington Police Department June 1, 1989, where he attended Basic Law Enforcement Training at the Burlington Police Department. During his career he served in Patrol Division and Traffic Division as a Patrolman and Patrolman First Class including Field Training Officer. As Corporal Kerns served as the DARE Officer where he implemented the DARE Middle School Curriculum and the High School DARE Curriculum. He also assisted in the implementation of the Junior Police Academy in 1996 where he also assisted in teaching the classroom curriculum. In 2000, Kerns transferred to Criminal Investigations Juvenile Division and later was promoted to Sergeant investigating Major Adult Crimes. He continued his career in investigations after being promoted to Staff Sergeant over the Juvenile Division and then transferring to overseeing Adult Crimes. In 2005, was promoted to Lieutenant in Administration. As lieutenant he oversaw the budget process and internal affairs investigations. As Captain Kerns was charged with overseeing Criminal Investigation Division and Special Operations then transferring to oversee Patrol Division. In 2012, he was promoted to Assistant Chief of Police over Operations.

As Assistant Chief of Police of Operations, he oversaw Patrol Division, Community Relations Division, Traffic Unit, and Communications. After his retirement from the Burlington Police Department Kerns has remained active in the department and the community. In addition to assisting with Burlington Police Department on a part-time basis he also serves as a Site-Based Assessment Team Leader for The Commission on Accreditation

for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA). CALEA is the national accreditation organization for law enforcement agencies across the USA.

During his career with the Burlington Police Department Eric received his North Carolina Advanced Law Enforcement Certification and in 2000 was awarded the Sheriff Ralph Robinson North Carolina DARE Officer of the Year Award.

“I have had the pleasure of working with Eric closely before his retirement in 2018; he embodies the principles of professional law enforcement with a heart for service. We are so fortunate to have a professional of this caliber already inside the doors of the police department and I’m thrilled that he is willing and able to step in to serve as Interim Chief. Eric is well-known and well-respected in Burlington and Alamance County and I’m confident he will be able to hit the ground running and keep the department on track as we search for the next Chief in the coming weeks and months.” stated City Manager, Hardin Watkins.

Kerns and his family are life-long residents of Burlington/Elon area where they have been active members of this community through the school system, faith-based community and many more ways enriching this community through their service.

Interim Police Chief Kerns said, “I am honored to have been appointed Interim Police Chief for the Burlington Police Department. This is an exemplary agency and I am excited to assist as the City searches for the next Police Chief.”

The City of Burlington has initiated a robust recruitment and selection process that is expected to culminate with the announcement of a new Chief in late summer or early fall of 2021. In order to ensure that the City’s next Police Chief meets the needs of the Burlington community, the City’s Human Resources Department and City Manager’s Office is working with a executive recruitment and selection firm to design a coordinated process for community and staff input on the skills, traits, and characteristics of the ideal candidate. National recruitment efforts will begin in early May and be followed by panel interviews and assessment center exercises. The public will be asked to participate in providing input and feedback to the city about next police chief in the coming weeks. The City will announce these opportunities as they are formalized.

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Our Mission:

“The City of Burlington is dedicated to providing high quality municipal services within our diverse community in a friendly, professional and efficient manner in order to promote the safety, health, and quality of life of residents and employees.”

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