



Police Department – Brian O’Hara, Chief of Police

350 S. Fifth St. - Room 130

Minneapolis, MN 55415

TEL 612.673.3559

www.minneapolismn.gov

TO: Joseph Klimmek #3735

CC: Internal Affairs Division

DATE: February 20, 2026

RE: Internal Affairs Administrative Investigation Case #EVT-519

This memo summarizes my decision-making process as Chief of the Minneapolis Police Department regarding the policy listed below alleged as a violation, whether it has been sustained or not, and any corrective action issued because of any sustained violation.

Allegation Summaries and Basis for each Decision:

Allegation: MPD P&P 5-108 (IV)(A)(3)(d)(i) Social Media Sites – Personal Use Affecting or Impacting the Workplace: It is alleged that Officer Klimmek liked a comment on Facebook that detracts from the public faith and participates in offensive or hateful conduct.

- On March 17, 2024, a Facebook post was made by a party on the “Minneapolis Police Officers and Civilian Employees, Current and Retired” Facebook group. Officer Joseph Klimmek (“Officer Klimmek”) was a member of the group at the time. This Facebook group is not affiliated with any official Minneapolis Police Department accounts.
- The post’s author wrote, “Suspect accused of murdering cop, who stopped to help repair the tire, caught.” The post also included a link to a news article about a man who had been accused of murdering a cop. Both the article and the link to the post also included a photograph of the suspect, who appears to be a black man.
- A comment was made on the post by a member of the Facebook group stating, “Get a [r]ope and find a tree.”
- Officer Klimmek used his personal Facebook account to click “like” on both the original post and the comment “Get a [r]ope and find a tree.”
- Although the privacy settings of the group only allowed group members to directly access to the group’s content, members were able to take screenshots. A group member took a screenshot of the post and the comment that Officer Klimmek “liked.” The individual provided both screenshots to MPD Internal Affairs.
- Officer Klimmek stated that he was Facebook friends “mostly” with cops, who he identified as his coworkers, and “just a few family and friends.” He stated that although

he did not use his real last name on his profile, individuals who were his Facebook friends “would know” that the account he was using belonged to him and that among his friends were individuals who know that he works for MPD as a police officer. Officer Klimmek stated that he believed the group’s members were current and former MPD officers.

- During his investigative interview, Officer Klimmek admitted to clicking “like” on the comment “Get a [r]ope and find a tree.”
- Officer Klimmek stated during his investigative interview that he liked the comment because “I was probably supportive of that post, uh, the death penalty for someone who murdered a police officer.”
- When asked if he supported “the death penalty by getting a rope and finding a tree,” Officer Klimmek responded, “yeah, if that’s the method of execution, for sure.”
- When asked if he was aware of any negative connotations with the phrase, “get a rope and find a tree,” Officer Klimmek stated, “can’t think of any.”
- Per Officer Klimmek, he was not aware of any racial connotations with the phrase “get a rope and find a tree.”
- Per Officer Klimmek, he “assumed” the race of the person identified as the alleged shooter in the Facebook post was African American.
- Officer Klimmek stated he was aware that the phrase “get a rope and find a tree” has historical meaning, explaining, “Hang ‘Em High, Like Clint Eastwood would catch bandits and he give the death penalty.”
- When asked if the phrase “get a rope and find a tree” has typically been used about any specific types of people, Officer Klimmek stated, “yes, bad people, criminals.”
- When asked what he believed the term “lynching” to mean, Officer Klimmek stated, “when you hang somebody unjustly, like a maybe with lynching versus going through trial and the process of the trial, maybe like mob justice more so.”
- When asked if lynching and the statement “get a rope and find a tree” could be correlated, Officer Klimmek stated, “I guess anyone can correlate anything to whatever they want.”
- Officer Klimmek stated that he does not believe that liking the comment was inappropriate, nor does he believe liking the comment had an impact on his workplace or relationships with other officers, agencies or the public. He stated, “it doesn’t have anything to do with MPD, but also I think MPD would support the death penalty for a cop killer.”
- Officer Klimmek explained that he believed liking the comment did not have anything to do with his job as a Minneapolis Police Officer because he was off-duty when he liked the comment, and he used his personal account.
- When asked if he would do anything differently in this situation, Officer Klimmek stated he would have “probably not liked it, so I won’t be here, but I still support the death penalty for someone who murders a police officer.”

- Officer Klimmek received one on one social media policy training in 2015.
- The Community Commission on Police Oversight (CCPO) recommended a finding of **MERIT** to the allegation that Officer Klimmek violated MPD P&P 5-108(IV)(A)(3)(d)(i) at a C Level.
- I concur with the CCPO recommendation that Officer Klimmek violated MPD P&P 5-108 (IV)(A)(3)(d)(i), which prohibits social media activity that “may affect or impact the workplace,” including, for example “[w]hen conduct on personal Social Media could be perceived as a conflict with the City’s mission, values, or degrades public trust in the City or its department.”
- While I concur that Officer Klimmek violated MPD P&P 5-108(IV)(A)(3)(d)(ii), I disagree with the level of severity to a violation of this policy, as I find that this violation falls under a category E level. To be clear, this determination has nothing to do with Officer Klimmek believing in or expressing support for the death penalty. It has to do with Officer Klimmek liking a comment and thereby endorsing the extrajudicial execution of a suspect by lynching. At the time of Officer Klimmek’s conduct, the Discipline Matrix described category E level violations as acts that could have a serious negative impact on the professionalism of the MPD, an act that demonstrates a serious lack of integrity, ethics or character that relates to an MPD employee’s fitness to hold their position, and egregious misconduct substantially contrary to the standards of conduct reasonably expected by those whose sworn duty is to uphold the law. The description of violations that fall under Category E describes Officer Klimmek’s conduct in this case.
- The public trust has been violated by Officer Klimmek’s support for this post. What he believes now or believed when he liked the comment does not actually matter to my analysis. If Officer Klimmek knew that “[g]et a [r]ope and find a tree” was a statement endorsing the lynching of a black suspect, he expressed agreement with that racist sentiment when he liked the comment. I frankly find it incredible that Officer Klimmek could genuinely not have an awareness of the historical connection between hanging people by a rope from a tree and the systemic targeting of black people and other people of color. However, even if Officer Klimmek did not know this, his lack of knowledge and appreciation for the clear meaning of the phrase that he “liked” means that he cannot be police officer for the MPD.
- Additionally, as officers of the law we make arrests based upon reasonable articulable suspicion and/or probable cause. After this, we have done our job. We do not make decisions on guilt or innocence. We leave that to our justice system and due process, even though we may be called on to testify about the evidence that we have gathered and the processes in which we engage. By “liking” the comment “[g]et a [r]ope and find a tree,” Officer Klimmek expressed a sentiment that is patently inconsistent with being a law enforcement officer. Officers do not have the power of “judge, jury, and executioner.” Even if Officer Klimmek believes in the death penalty, which he is certainly entitled to, officers must respect due process and conduct themselves

accordingly so as to not call into question their fitness to serve.

- When asked after time for reflection and time to inform himself fully on the history of lynching, Officer Klimmek only stated he “probably” wouldn’t like the comment again “so [he] wo[ould]n’t be here.” He did not express any remorse for his actions. His comments during the Loudermill meeting further underscore that Officer Klimmek just does not understand or appreciate his role in upholding the public trust or the betrayal of that trust inherent in the comment that he liked. Rather than discuss efforts to improve his understanding of the racist implications of the comment that he liked or the damage it could have done to MPD’s delicate relationships with the communities it serves, Officer Klimmek discussed how he has started to work out again and stopped his “only vice” of drinking soda. He stated that he has learned not to disparage the MPD. All of this completely misses the point and the gravity of the risk his conduct created, and it has caused an irreparable loss of trust and confidence in Officer Klimmek.
- This allegation is **SUSTAINED. The Discipline Matrix calls for termination, therefore Officer Klimmek will be discharged.**

Allegation	Policy Number	Policy Description	Category	Disposition
1	MPD P&P 5-108 (IV)(A)(3)(d)(i)	Social Media Sites -Personal Use Affecting or Impacting the Workplace	E	Discharge

Conclusion

Based on the facts presented and the evidence reviewed, I find the above listed policy violation allegation is Sustained. The CCPO recommended a Category C violation; however, Officer Klimmek’s conduct in this matter has had a serious negative impact on the professionalism of the MPD and has demonstrated a serious lack of integrity, ethics and character related to his fitness to hold his position. The comment that Officer Klimmek liked was not an endorsement of a personal belief that the death penalty should be imposed for individuals who have received due process and found to have killed officers. Officer Klimmek endorsed the lynching of an African American suspect by “get[ting] a [r]ope and find[ing] a tree.” Officer Klimmek’s claim of not knowing that the phrase, “Get a rope and find a tree” is affiliated with an unquestionably violent history of racism and slavery, and his claimed lack of knowledge demonstrates how out of touch he is with history. The public cannot trust his judgment, and I cannot trust his judgment. This Department has been engaged in an intentional effort to rebuild trust with the diverse communities that it serves for many years, most notably following the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Officer Klimmek’s endorsement of lynching came on the heels of a court enforceable settlement agreement reached by the City of Minneapolis on the Minnesota Department of Human Rights on March 31, 2023. The settlement agreement related

to that agency's report finding that MPD officers engaged in a "pattern of race discrimination" in violation of state law. His conduct also came on the heels of a report issued by the U.S. Department of Justice on June 16, 2023, that MPD "[u]nlawfully discriminates against Black people" in its enforcement actions. In short, Officer Klimmek should have known better, and he should have done better.

This Department has made clear its commitment to rebuilding the trust of the communities it serves. Officer Klimmek's conduct threatens to derail these efforts. As Chief of Police, I am responsible for providing clear expectations about behavior and conduct in all situations, not just when it is convenient. These expectations extend from myself to the command staff and all levels of the Minneapolis Police Department. My predecessors have also borne responsibility for setting expectations, and it is incumbent on every Chief to hold officers accountable for breaches of those expectations. Legitimacy and reputation are of critical importance to police officers. Officers carry a badge and gun and are called upon to make some of the hardest decisions possible. It takes countless actions to build a reservoir of trust and only one action to completely drain it. Now more than ever we cannot afford to lose legitimacy with the people we serve; a loss of legitimacy with the community is a critical safety concern for residents and officers.

I hold officers of the Minneapolis Police Department to a high standard. I expect them to live up to our Oath of Office, our Professional Code of Ethics, and our department's core values of Trust, Accountability, and Professional Service. Furthermore, I expect them to demonstrate procedural justice and respect for the community we serve in their work. With this conduct, Officer Klimmek demonstrated a severe lack of judgement, was inconsistent with our mission, vision, and values, and failed to meet our standards when he violated Minneapolis Police Department policy during this incident.

For these reasons I am sustaining this allegation as a Category E, and I **DISCHARGE** Officer Klimmek from the Minneapolis Police Department.

Brian O'Hara
Chief of Police

DocuSigned by:

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02/20/2026

CC: IA/OPCR Case file
Inspector Bill Peterson



DISCHARGE, SUSPENSION OR INVOLUNTARY DEMOTION FORM

Please enter the requested information directly into the form and provide a copy to the employee once completed and signed.

Employee Name: Joseph Klimmek	Employee ID: 003735
Job Title: Police Officer	Job Code:
Department: Minneapolis Police Department	
Is this employee a Veteran? ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unknown	
Has this employee passed probation? ☒ Yes ☐ No	

NATURE OF ACTION:

☒ Discharge: Effective Date: February 20, 2021 At 3:00 pm ☐ a.m. ☒ p.m.

☐ Probationary Release: Effective Date: At 3:00 ☐ a.m. ☐ p.m.

☐ Suspension without pay:

Total Working Days (or hours):

Beginning on:

Ending on:

☐ Demotion:

☐ Permanent – Effective Date:

☐ Temporary – Beginning on:

Ending on:

Demoted to:

Job Title: Job Code: at the following hourly rate of pay or annual salary: \$

REASON(S) FOR THIS ACTION: (Check applicable boxes below and attach Letter of Determination that includes specific violations)

☒ Violation of Civil Service Commission Rule 11.03 – Subdivision: B19, B20

☐ A. Substandard Performance

☒ B. Misconduct

☒ Violation of the Department Rule(s), Law(s), Ordinance(s), or Regulation(s) 5-108

NOTICE TO CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES OF LEGAL RIGHTS

DISCHARGE AND PROBATIONARY RELEASE AND SUSPENSION AND INVOLUNTARY DEMOTION

Probationary Employees – Employees, including veterans separated from the United States military service under honorable conditions, who have not passed an initial hiring probationary period do not have a right to a hearing before the Civil Service Commission (CSC).

Veteran Employees (Permanent) - Employees holding a permanent position with the City or Park Board of Minneapolis, and who is a veteran separated from the United States military service under honorable conditions and who has passed an initial hiring probationary period, has a right to a hearing prior to discharge from employment or involuntary demotion. Temporary employees who are veterans do not have a right to a hearing.

Permanent Non-Veteran Employees have a right to a hearing by the CSC upon written request. Non-veterans who have passed probation are permanent employees.

Disciplinary Suspension or Demotion - Employees may be suspended without pay for disciplinary reasons for periods not to exceed 90 calendar days. Suspensions of 31 to 90 calendar days may be appealed by the employee to the CSC.

Employees may be demoted for disciplinary reasons and/or for substandard performance, either temporarily (up to 180 days) or permanently. Permanent employees may appeal any permanent demotion and/or salary decrease.

DISCHARGE, SUSPENSION OR INVOLUNTARY DEMOTION FORM**NOTICE TO CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES OF LEGAL RIGHTS continued****REQUESTING A HEARING**

IMPORTANT: The employee should refer to the Civil Service Rules and/or the appropriate labor contract to determine what, if any, appeal rights he or she may have. The employee may choose whether to appeal this action through the Civil Service Commission or through processes available through a labor contract, but may not appeal through both.

Requesting a Hearing: Non-Veterans - A written request for hearing must be postmarked or received by the Civil Service Commission within 15 calendar days from the date disciplinary action was provided to the employee. The 15 days are counted from the first day after the notice was provided to the employee. If the 15th day falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the request may be served on or before the following business day. The date of postmark must be within that 15-day period. The request for a hearing may be accompanied by the employee's statement of his or her version of the case.

Requesting a Hearing: Veterans - A written request for hearing must be received by the Civil Service Commission within 30 calendar days of receipt by the employee of the notice of intent to discharge. The 30 days are counted from the first day after receipt of the notice by the employee. If the 30th day falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the request may be served on or before the following business day. The request for a hearing may be accompanied by the employee's statement of his or her version of the case. A failure to request a hearing within the provided 30 day calendar period constitutes a waiver of the right to a hearing.

ALL REQUESTS FOR A HEARING AND APPEALS MUST BE MAILED WITHIN THE REQUIRED TIMELINES TO:

Minneapolis Human Resources Department/Civil Service Commission
350 South 5th Street, Room 1, City Hall
Minneapolis, MN 55415

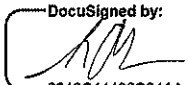
NOTIFICATION TO EMPLOYEE:

☒ The employee was given an opportunity to respond to the written charges at a pre-determination meeting held on: Date: September 15, 2025

☐ The employee failed to appear at the pre-determination meeting.

☒ A copy of this form and relevant accompanying information was given to the employee on _____.

☐ A copy of this form and relevant accompanying information was sent by US mail, to the employee's address of record provided by employee.

DocuSigned by:

Signature of Department Head: _____
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Date: 02/20/2026

Signature of Person Mailing/Delivering Notice: _____

Date: 2/20/2024

Entered into COMET-HR by: _____

Date: _____