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Independent Interview of Mr. Gregory Hugger
CITY OF URBANA

July 8, 2020

Confidential and Proprietary

HILLARD  HEINTZE®
A JENSEN HUGHES COMPANY

July 8, 2020

Mayor Diane Marlin
City of Urbana
400 South Vine Street
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Dear Mayor Marlin:

We have completed our independent, third-party interview of an individual who posted a video of the arrest of Aleyah Lewis on April 10, 2020. We conducted the interview to address unattributed claims that one or more Urbana Police Department officers asked the individual to remove the video from social media.

At the request of the City and the Urbana Police Department, our investigators identified the individual who posted the video as Mr. Gregory Hugger. The investigators contacted Mr. Hugger and conducted an interview with him. We provided Mr. Hugger's statements in this report.

As with any of our reports of this nature, Hillard Heintze stands behind these findings as (1) objectively determined; (2) accurately reported; (3) legally acquired; (4) compliant with all relevant laws, policies, procedures and regulations; (5) comprehensive in scope to the best of our ability; and (6) collected with discretion, investigative diligence and professional respect – for the City and the Urbana Police Department and their employees, as well as Mr. Hugger and his privacy, interests and relationships.

This report is a confidential and proprietary work document between Hillard Heintze and the City of Urbana. Thank you for putting your trust in our team.

Sincerely,
HILLARD HEINTZE LLC



Debra Kirby, Esq.
Senior Vice President, Operations



Independent Interview of Mr. Gregory Hugger

INTRODUCTION

On June 19, 2020, the City of Urbana engaged Hillard Heintze to conduct an independent, third-party interview of an individual who posted a video of the arrest of Aleyah Lewis on April 10, 2020 to address unattributed claims that one or more Urbana Police Department (UPD) officers asked him to remove the video from social media. City leadership asked Hillard Heintze to provide a written report of the interview conducted and provide recommendations for any required subsequent actions.

Director Mark Giuffre led the project with support from Investigator James Jones. Hillard Heintze Senior Vice President Debra Kirby provided oversight for this engagement.

Documents Reviewed

City of Urbana leadership referenced online, open-source reporting of the allegation. Hillard Heintze searched online and identified only one news article that reported on the April 10, 2020 incident involving UPD officers on East Colorado Avenue and contained an allegation that UPD officers asked the individual who posted a video of the incident that occurred on that date to take it down.

The article reported in part, “The person who videotaped the event, Gregory Hugger, posted it that day; the video has been viewed by over 34,000 people and has received 1,800 comments. Police allegedly visited Mr. Hugger’s home later and asked him to take his video down, but he refused.”¹ The article did not contain any information attributing the source to the claim that police visited Mr. Hugger and asked him to take his video down.

Interviews Conducted

We reviewed the materials and formulated a preliminary investigative plan. Subsequently, we contacted Mr. Hugger, who consented to an interview. On July 1, 2020, Hillard Heintze Investigator James Jones interviewed Mr. Hugger.

INTERVIEW OF GREGORY HUGGER

On June 30, 2020, at approximately 3 p.m., Hillard Heintze Investigator James Jones called Mr. Gregory Hugger at (217) 390-2725, the cell phone number identified for Mr. Hugger. Mr. Hugger did not answer the call. Jones left a voicemail for Mr. Hugger to return his call.

On July 1, 2020, at approximately 9:10 a.m., Investigator Jones called Mr. Hugger at the same phone number. Jones identified himself to Mr. Hugger as an investigator with Hillard Heintze, which was contracted by the City of Urbana to conduct an independent interview regarding allegations that a UPD officer or officers contacted Mr. Hugger and requested Mr. Hugger take down a video post regarding the arrest of Aleyah Lewis on April 10, 2020.

¹ publici.ucimc.org/2020/05/public-speaks-out-about-use-of-force-by-urbana-police-council-reviews-police-investigation/



Mr. Hugger stated that “no one” had contacted him “to take down anything.” Jones asked, “Just to clarify, you were not approached or contacted by anyone from the Urbana Police Department to take down a video post?” Mr. Hugger replied, “I have not been contacted by anyone.”

At the conclusion of the interview, Jones thanked Mr. Hugger for his time and asked if he could contact Mr. Hugger if he had any further questions at a later time. Mr. Hugger stated that Jones could do so. The interview concluded at approximately 9:14 a.m.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION

Mr. Hugger’s statements directly contradict the unattributed report contained in the online newspaper article. Our interview of Mr. Hugger did not establish an allegation of misconduct against any UPD officers regarding a request to remove Mr. Hugger’s video posted from social media. According to Mr. Hugger, such a request was never received. In the event new information is obtained about the unattributed claim that UPD officers asked an individual to take down a video posted on social media; it should be investigated. However, in this matter, the sole article and known video was filmed by Mr. Hugger, who stated he was never contacted by UPD officers to remove the video. At this time, we do not recommend any further action.