

Hingham Fire Department ordered to remove Thin Blue Line flags in support of Police officer Michael Chesna

The town of Hingham has ordered the Hingham Fire Department to remove Thin Blue Line flags from their fire trucks. The flags were being displayed leading up to the anniversary of Weymouth Police officer Michael Chesna's death, who was shot 10 times and killed with his own gun in 2018.

Officer Chesna was killed while responding to a call on Jul 15, 2018. Emanuel Lopes is being charged with striking Officer Chesna with a rock, picking up Chesna's gun then standing over the officer and firing 10 shots into Chesna's head, torso, and legs.

The Hingham Fire Department Union provided updates of them being ordered to take down the Thin Blue Line flags by the town:

On July 23:

"The Men and Women of Hingham Firefighters Local 2398 proudly support our brothers and sisters in blue. Our members recently displayed this support in the form of flying the "Thin Blue Line" American Flag on our fire apparatus. The flags were recently put on the apparatus leading up to the anniversary of the senseless murder of officer Michael Chesna in our neighboring community of Weymouth. We continued to fly the flags after the anniversary in support of the law enforcement officers in our own community, as well as all law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line every day. At NO TIME, was this meant to be a political statement in any way. Nor was it an attempt to show support for, or against, any

specific political party or advocacy group. A complaint was made to the town in reference to the flags and it was determined that flying the flags on the apparatus was a violation of a town policy. While the members of Local 2398 are not pleased with the decision to remove the flags, we will continue our unwavering support for all the men and women of law enforcement who bravely protect their communities day in and day out. We will always Back The Blue.” – Local 2398 President

On July 27:

“The past few days have been very disappointing for the members of Local 2398. Our disappointment began with the decision that the “Thin Blue Line” flags should be removed from our apparatus. That feeling has continued over the past few days, as our repeated requests for a copy of the policy that we have allegedly violated, have been met with silence. The firefighters of Local 2398 display the highest level of professionalism and respect at all times, and it is disheartening to not have that reciprocated.

Despite the frustration this has caused, the community has responded with an overwhelming outpouring of support for the members of Local 2398, Hingham Police officers, Weymouth Police officers, and the Chesna family. The voices of support have far outweighed the voices of opposition. It is abundantly clear the vast majority of people support the thin blue line for exactly what it represents.

The “Thin Blue Line” has existed for over 100 years. It has always, and will always, represent the men and women of law enforcement that hold the line between peace and chaos. Especially those who have bravely made the ultimate sacrifice during the performance of these heroic duties. We stand by our initial statement that this has no political message for one reason, and one reason only, because honoring the sacrifices

made by the men and women of law enforcement is not political.
Period.

It should also be noted that several instances of material that could be viewed as "political" in nature have been found throughout the Town of Hingham. Many times on town owned property. It is our position that if this policy does exist, it should be enforced in all instances. It should not be based on whether or not a resident finds it offensive.

At this time the Hingham Firefighters of Local 2398 respectfully request the town reconsider their decision to deem these flags as political statements. Otherwise, we regret to inform you that over the past 4 days no member of Local 2398 was able to sacrifice his or her moral fortitude in order to remove the flags from the apparatus. As we said before, our support for our brothers and sisters in blue is unwavering. The flags have continued to fly with honor every day. They will have to be removed by someone other than a member of this union.

In Solidarity,

Hingham Firefighters Local 2398
Lt. Chris Melanson
Local 2398 President"

On July 30:



Richard MacKinnon Jr.
President

Billy Cabral
Secretary-Treasurer

Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts

Affiliated with the International Association of Fire Fighters AFL-CIO CLC

7/30/20

TO: ALL MEMBERS
FROM: OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
RE: **Thin Blue Line Flag**

Brothers and Sisters:

In light of recent events unfolding across the Commonwealth and our Nation, our Brothers and Sisters in blue have been under unprecedented and seemingly unrelenting attacks. This has occurred in the form of anti-labor legislation on Beacon Hill, anti-police rhetoric in the media, and overall negative sentiment towards the good men and women that put on a uniform every day and strive to protect and serve.

This week the men and women of the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts decided to take a stand in solidarity with our family in blue. That stand originated when Hingham Fire Fighters Local 2398 were ordered to remove the thin blue line flag that they were flying in support of slain Weymouth Police Sgt. Michael Chesna, because it was deemed offensive by fire dept and town leadership. After holding strong for over a week, Hingham Fire Fighters were joined this morning by the Weymouth Police union, who took custody of the thin blue line flags.

In an act of solidarity, the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, working in unison with the Weymouth Police union and Weymouth Fire Local 1616, will pick up the torch initially lit by Hingham Local 2398. The thin blue line flag originally hung by Hingham Firefighters in honor of Sgt. Chesna will be making a tour around Massachusetts to be flown from fire trucks in communities that support public safety.

When the tour concludes, the Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, in collaboration with the Weymouth Police Union and Weymouth Fire Local 1616, will present the flag which was flown in support for our family in blue all over the Commonwealth, to the Chesna family. Any local wishing to participate, please reach out to District 1 Vice President James Brown @ District1VP@PFFM.org.

In Solidarity,

Rich MacKinnon Jr.
President
Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts

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