



POLICE DEPARTMENT
500 North Cass Avenue, Westmont, Illinois 60559-1503

Main: 630-981-6300 Records: 630-981-6303
Investigations: 630-981-6302 Administration: 630-981-6363
westmont.il.gov | police@westmont.il.gov



PRESS RELEASE

June 10, 2019

Message from the Chief:

As you may be aware, a video titled “Westmont Police Intimidation Fail” was posted on YouTube. Unfortunately, and as is often the case, this video does not capture a previous interaction with the individual, nor does it provide full and accurate information concerning the issue. Since its posting, some people have attached negative comments, which include vile and offensive language. Some individuals wrote comments that suggested harm and death to our officers. People have a right to voice their opinions, however, it is my duty to provide accurate information regarding the account as well as defend the integrity of our officers.

On Sunday, May 26, 2019, officers from the Westmont Police Department were called by the Westmont Park District to respond to an issue at the Bellerive Skate Park on 63rd Street in Westmont. The request was to assist with responding to an organized crowd that was in violation of several park district ordinances.

Prior to the arrival of the Westmont Police Department, a Westmont Park District Park Patrol official approached the group and observed an organized group of approximately 50 people with one person using a megaphone to coordinate activities. Also, there were two unleashed dogs on the property. Additionally, there were containers of beer and beer cans in the vicinity of the group. Each of these items are a violation of Park District rules:

Division IV Personal Conduct and Behavior - Section 1 Disorderly Conduct - A. Disturbing the Peace

- Section 6 Parades, Public Assemblies or Meetings
- Section 15 Alcoholic Liquor C. Possession and Consumption without a permit
- Section 19 Cooperation with Authorities

Division VII Permits and Regulations Section - 2 Activities Regulated by Permit

The person with the megaphone challenged the authority of the Park Patrol official, even while members of the group were trying to calm the individual down. During the initial conversation, the individual admitted to being the owner of an opened case of beer, but then denied his ownership. According to the video, the group was part of “*an annual BMX Jam at the Westmont Skate Park.*”



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Westmont Park District rules exist to ensure the safety of all its guests. Skateparks by their very nature pose a greater concern for the safety of its guests, and therefore specific rules are put in place to address these possible issues. Overcrowding of the park and alcohol consumption pose an unreasonable danger to the guests who come to use and enjoy the park. The violations created a clear safety concern for the guests.

The individual was asked to leave Bellerive Park at the request of park district staff for not complying with Park Patrol and officers directions. The rest of the approximately 50 people complied with the Park Patrol official by cleaning up the beer cans and putting away the rest of their beer supply. No one other than the one individual was asked to leave the park property. He left the skate park and went to the parking lot where he began to record with his phone. What was posted was approximately nine minutes of video taken knowing that officers were going to approach him to ensure that he left the property.

The video clearly shows that our officers approached the individual with the specific purpose of making sure that the individual complied with the park patrol request of asking the person to leave the property. It is clear that our officers never used derogatory language nor threatening behavior during the interaction. The officers never touched the individual. The officers did not ask for the individual's ID until he started using profanity and was to be written a ticket for breaking another park rule. At no time did officers interfere with the individual's right to record the encounter.

During the exchange, the individual implied that the public park was under the authority of the Village of Westmont municipality, which is not accurate. The park is under the authority of the Westmont Park District. Several times, as our officers tried to explain this, they incorrectly used the word "private" entity, when instead the accurate word would have been a "separate" entity.

Ultimately, the Westmont Police Department law enforcement agency has the right and the duty to enforce laws. Additionally, there is a positive relationship between the Village of Westmont and the Westmont Park District in which it is the expected protocol that the Park District will contact the Westmont Police Department if they need assistance with ensuring that laws and rules are followed, all for the purpose of ensuring order and safety.

In this instance, we feel that the Park Patrol and the Westmont Police Department used the lowest level of intervention possible, which was to simply talk to the individual and ask him to comply with the request to leave the park after being associated with a number of rule and ordinance violations, and then challenging Park Patrol who was attempting to get the group to move towards compliance.



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Law enforcement is regularly under scrutiny as we attempt to serve the public. Members of the Westmont Police Department appreciate the outpouring of support we regularly receive from our community. Sometimes, members of our citizenry work to discredit law enforcement as we work to perform our duties. In this case, I felt it was necessary to provide the full facts of this matter so that the public is properly informed of the situation.

If anyone has further questions about this situation or other local law enforcement matters, please contact me at chiefofpolice@westmont.il.gov.

Sincerely,
James Gunther