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A Message from Mayor Alice Fredericks

Our community members have expressed concern and outrage regarding an incident that occurred early Friday morning at Yema, a black-owned business on Main Street in downtown Tiburon. Information regarding the incident was posted on social media and included a video showing a portion of the interaction between the business owners and the Town police. As Mayor of Tiburon and as a member of this community, I too am troubled by the incident. I have reviewed and discussed this matter with Town Manager Greg Chanis and Police Chief Michael Cronin and gathered the following information.

At approximately 1:00 a.m., a Tiburon Police Officer on a routine downtown patrol observed activity at Yema. He proceeded to further investigate because the activity was occurring well beyond the 10 p.m. time that the last restaurant closes down. The Officer engaged in a conversation with one of the individuals in the store in an attempt to ensure they were authorized to be in the store at 1 a.m. The responding officer was unable to determine the identity of the individual, and after approximately 5 minutes, the officer was joined by a supervising Sergeant from the Police Department. The Sergeant continued the conversation, which became increasingly heated and argumentative, and only ended when a resident of a neighboring property confirmed the individual speaking with the officers was one of the owners of the Yema store.

On behalf of the Tiburon Town Council, I want to extend our heartfelt apologies to Yema Khalif and to Hawi Awash, the owners of Yema, for the incident. Whatever the intention of the responding officers, the interchange inappropriately deteriorated from helpful to confrontational. Tiburon Police Officers are trained and held to the highest standards of conduct. A key component of that training is the expectation our officers will utilize de-escalation techniques in situations like these. It is clear that did not occur in this instance. As a result, the Town Manager and Chief of Police have informed me they will retain an independent investigator to conduct a thorough review of Friday's incident. At the conclusion of the investigation, the findings will be reviewed by the Town Council.

I truly hope Yema Khalif and Hawi Awash will accept our apologies and also the warm welcome the Council and so many members of the Community have extended for the colorful, energetic and exciting new business they have brought to the heart of our downtown.

With apologies,
Alice Fredericks

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Tiburon Talk
c/o Town of Tiburon
