



Brian U. Stratton
Mayor

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NEW POLICE CHIEF NAMED IN SCHENECTADY

Stratton Appoints Mark R. Chaires as Schenectady's 16th Chief of Police

SCHENECTADY -- Mayor Brian U. Stratton today announced the appointment of Mark R. Chaires as Chief of Police in Schenectady. Chaires, a Schenectady native and 19-year veteran of the Schenectady Police Department, and its Assistant Chief of Police in charge of Administrative Services since 2001, assumes day-to-day leadership responsibility for the 166-member department and its \$14.7 million budget. His salary will be \$115,000 annually.

Mayor Stratton administered the oath of office to Chaires at a press conference at City Hall, making him the city's 16th chief of police since the Schenectady City Police Department was formally established in 1870. He succeeds Michael N. Geraci, who resigned in 2007 to accept a high-level position with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in Washington, D.C.

"It is with great pride, personal admiration and the highest of expectations for our community, that I today appoint Mark Chaires to the position of Chief of Police for the City of Schenectady," Stratton said. Stratton was joined by Public Safety Commissioner Wayne Bennett and City Council members, including City Council President Peggy King and Public Safety Chairman Gary McCarthy. Chaires' family members and fellow officers were also in attendance.

Mark Chaires was among seven to take the New York State civil service examination for the police chief's position on March 8, 2008, and one of six who passed the test. Of those, one candidate voluntarily withdrew from consideration and five advanced to the formal interview process with Mayor Stratton and Public Safety Commissioner Bennett.

"In my judgment, Mark Chaires clearly emerged as the strongest candidate to serve as our next chief of police. He is an individual of considerable character and integrity, with a proven record of leadership and accomplishment in the department, and he is well respected by his peers and in the community he serves," Stratton said.

- more -

September 18, 2008

Page 2

Mayor Stratton said Chief Chaires has a clear vision for the future of the department, and will bring the same strong sense of discipline and direction to work with Commissioner Wayne Bennett to lead the men and women of the city police department at a critical time.

“Chief Chaires is a no-nonsense leader who has earned the respect of rank-and-file patrol officers, civilians and his fellow managers within the department. His management style will effectively compliment the leadership, style and strong work ethic of Wayne Bennett, to bring order, discipline and a greater level of service to the people of Schenectady,” Mayor Stratton added.

Wayne Bennett, Commissioner of Public Safety, said, “I congratulate Mark Chaires on his selection as Chief of Police and I look forward to working with him to continue to improve the performance and professionalism of the Schenectady Police Department. As a Schenectady native and an experienced officer, Chief Chaires will take personal ownership for improving service delivery and professionalism within the department. He is more than capable of meeting the many challenges of his new command position, and I call upon all department personnel to fully support his leadership mission.”

Chief Chaires says his goal is to work with Mayor Stratton and Commissioner Bennett to continue to transform the police department into a highly disciplined, professional and respected law enforcement agency that delivers effective community-based policing with emphasis on quality, courtesy and customer service.

Chief Chaires outlined his priorities for moving forward: “As chief, my immediate priorities include a complete assessment of departmental management and supervisory assignments. We will also examine additional opportunities for maximizing coordination among our intelligence, patrol and investigative resources. Finally, working with Mayor Stratton and Commissioner Bennett, we will determine the most expedient and cost-effective means possible of implementing any changes deemed necessary in order to better serve and protect our customers -- the citizens of Schenectady.”

Mayor Stratton said Schenectady’s new chief immediately faces considerable challenges, both within the department and the community he serves.

“Mark Chaires assumes the rank of Chief of Police at a very challenging time for the Police Department and the City of Schenectady, as we continue to recover from the criminal actions of past personnel, to deal with allegations of police misconduct and the ever fluid and changing face of crime in our city. For that reason, I ask the City Council, his fellow officers, and the public at-large to join me in giving Chief Chaires our full support to fulfill his charge: to restore professionalism and integrity, while keeping our community safe,” Stratton said.

- more -

September 18, 2008

Page 3

Chaires joined the Schenectady Police Department as patrol officer in 1988, following a nine-year career with the United States Air Force. His career with the Schenectady Police Department has advanced steadily, beginning as a patrol officer to promotion to the positions of sergeant in 1993, lieutenant in 1998, and Assistant Chief of Police in 2001, where he has overseen the department's field services and administrative services bureaus.

Mark Chaires followed his father, Arthur Chaires, into a career in public service and police work. Arthur Chaires, who served as a Patrol Officer from 1952 to 1979, was Schenectady's first African-American police officer. Mark Chaires becomes the first African-American to be named Chief of Police in Schenectady. His mother Dorothy is a retired English teacher from the Albany School District.

As Assistant Chief, Chaires' leadership of the department's directed patrol unit anti-crime team resulted in the arrest of hundreds of criminals over two years. He has also worked to improve operational efficiencies within the police department, redirecting supervisors from internal responsibilities to operational assignments in the field.

During his Schenectady police career, Chaires improved the efficiency of traffic enforcement officers, oversaw the internal affairs operations and training divisions, and created the department's first human resources unit.

City Councilmember and Public Safety Committee Chair Gary R. McCarthy said, "I have had the opportunity to know and to work with Mark Chaires for more than two decades. I fully support Mayor Stratton's decision to appoint Mark as Schenectady's next Police Chief. He brings a full and historical knowledge of the problems facing the Schenectady Police Department, and a clear vision of what needs to be done to make this department the respected organization it can and should be."

Mark R. Chaires was born in Schenectady in 1955, and raised in the city's Hamilton Hill neighborhood. He attended Schenectady city schools and went on to obtain a Bachelor's Degree (1992) and a Master's degree in Criminal Justice from the University at Albany (1995). He is currently a Doctorate Degree candidate from the University at Albany, with his Prospectus defended in March 2007.

He resides in Scotia with his wife and family.