

CITY HALL INSIDER

Gordon grandstands to up profile, police leader says

The head of a coalition of Arizona police unions has blasted Phoenix Mayor **Phil Gordon** for holding a public forum last week on the altercation between Councilman **Michael Johnson** and a police officer.

Brian Livingston, executive director of the Arizona Police Association, wrote on the group's Web site that Gordon called for the March 22 meeting before the incident had been fully investigated to revive his "political persona."

The mayor faces term limits in January 2012 and recently balked at a bid for Congress.

"Mayor Phil Gordon, who by all accounts has seen his political life sunsetting, decided to use this incident to resurrect his name and public image before the investigation in the matter was even concluded," wrote Livingston, a former Phoenix police officer.

"We have now all seen the public spectacle, hidden behind the disguise of an open public meeting or forum on race relations between the Police Department and the city's minority community, where Phil tried, pathetically I might add, to portray a leader who truly cares about incidents involving race, sexual harassment and EEOC violations committed by the city's police officers."

Gordon said this week that because of Johnson's stature in the community, "tempers and passions have run high" since the March 19 incident in which the councilman was pushed, taken to the ground and handcuffed by the officer as he attempted to check on a neighbor whose south Phoenix house was on fire.

"Calming those emotions — by venting them, by listening to all members of the community and by taking a 360-degree approach to answering whatever questions this incident raises — was why I championed the community meeting," Gordon said in a statement. "As the APA noted, the investigation process continues. So does the listening process. Just as I've listened to everyone in this matter, I'm happy to listen to the APA."



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Gordon pointed out that shortly after the incident, he called **Mark Spencer**, president of the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association, the local APA affiliate.

"He's yet to return that call," Gordon added.

"I remain open to that conversation, should the APA and its officials approach me to talk instead of publicly releasing an inflammatory letter questioning a hearing that took place more than one week ago."

Livingston described the hearing as a "politically endorsed lynching" of the officer.

During the three-hour meeting, several members of the African-American community urged Gordon and Public Safety Manager **Jack Harris** to fire the two-year officer, **Brian Authement**, even though a police investigation won't wrap up for several weeks.

Also, a majority of council members boycotted the meeting, voicing concerns that they had not yet received legal advice and that the investigation was incomplete.

Johnson, a retired cop, has accused Authement of using excessive force and violating his civil rights. Authement has alleged through a police spokesman that Johnson actually assaulted him.

Despite Johnson's allegations, Livingston praised the councilman as a dedicated public servant and strong advocate for the "health, safety and welfare" of police officers, sentiments Gordon seconded.

"(Johnson) can always be counted on when good counsel is needed or when an officer needs support for himself or his family," Livingston wrote. "City of Phoenix citizens chose well when they placed him in elected office and he in turn has proven himself worthy of the public trust given to him by his constituents."

Scott Wong covers City Hall. Reach him at scott.wong@arizonarepublic.com or follow him at phxbeat.azcentral.com.