



Harlingen Hero Hangs Up Badge After 35 Years

January 23, 2025

HARLINGEN - After 35 years of dedicated service to the City of Harlingen, Police Chief Michael Kester is hanging up his badge. In a farewell address at the January 15th City Commissioners Meeting, city officials and colleagues honored Kester whose leadership transformed the police department and shaped the way the city fights crime in an ever-changing landscape.

Reflecting on his journey, Chief Kester expressed gratitude to those who supported him throughout his career.

“Mayor, City Commissioners, especially City Manager Gonzalez, I want to thank you. Thank you for all of your support and help because it’s a tough enough job, but without the support of all of you, it would have been even tougher, and I probably wouldn’t have lasted that long,” Kester said. “If you had asked me 35 years ago if I would have been standing here in front of you as chief, I would’ve thought that would’ve never happened, but it’s been an incredible career and a pleasure to work for the City of Harlingen.”

Kester’s journey through the department was one of perseverance, dedication, and steadfast commitment to the safety of Harlingen residents. Throughout his career, he worked in every division of the police force, earning the respect and admiration of his officers and the community alike.

Mayor Norma Sepulveda praised Kester’s character and leadership, noting the unwavering support he received from his department.

“Thank you, Chief. You know, I think I speak for everyone here when I say we’re just so honored that you have been with the City of Harlingen for 35 years. That’s an exceptional career that you have led with integrity,” Sepulveda said.

Under Kester’s leadership, the Harlingen Police Department made significant strides in crime prevention and resolution. His commitment to his officers and to the citizens of Harlingen never wavered. Sepulveda highlighted his deep sense of duty, both as a public servant and a family man.

“We appreciate you so much. We know that you’re a family man, too, and I think this is what makes you an incredible leader - you have a big heart, and what you do for your family and what you do for your work family is so appreciated,” she said. “The citizens of Harlingen are better off because you’re at the helm of the organization.”

City Manager Gabriel Gonzalez echoed those sentiments, emphasizing the legacy Kester leaves behind.

“I think when you reflect back on the police department and all the accolades that they have achieved - how the officers function, how they solve crimes, how they go after somebody tenaciously and don’t give up until they catch the bad guy - I think that reflects on you and how you are committed to doing a great job,” Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez also noted that Kester's vast institutional knowledge of the department would be deeply missed. "I'll definitely miss you - not being able to call you and ask you a question about an incident that happened because you have such a great institutional memory about the police department, and that will not be there anymore," he said. "You're going to be missed. So thank you, and I hope you and your wife

and your family enjoy your retirement." As Kester steps into the next chapter of his life, the community he served so faithfully bids him a heartfelt farewell. His decades of service leave a lasting impact on the city, and his legacy will live on in the department he helped build. "God bless you and your family," Sepulveda said. "We wish nothing but happiness for you and your family."



Pictured: Police Chief Michael Kester speaks with city leaders in his farewell address at the January 15th City Commissioners Meeting