



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 28, 2026**

Bessemer City Announces Retirement of
Public Safety Director/Police Chief Thomas Ellis, Jr.;
Deputy Chief Christopher Vaughn to Lead Department

Bessemer City, NC — After more than four decades in law enforcement, including 13 years of service to Bessemer City, Public Safety Director and Police Chief Thomas Ellis, Jr. will retire as leader of the Bessemer City Police Department. The leadership transition will take place on April 1, 2026, as part of the City's long-term succession planning to ensure continued stability and excellence in public safety leadership.

Chief Ellis' impact on Bessemer City is deeply felt within the department today. When City Council voted to reestablish the Bessemer City Police Department in 2013, his experience, leadership, and professional reputation made him the right choice to build the department from the ground up. He led the effort to restart operations, establish policies and standards, and shape the culture of professionalism and integrity that defines BCPD today.

During his tenure, Chief Ellis focused on strengthening training, reinforcing accountability, and fostering positive relationships between officers and the community. His steady leadership helped lay a strong foundation for a department built on trust, service, and high standards.

Reflecting on his career, Ellis said his time in Bessemer City has been among the most rewarding of his life. He shared that he is humbled to have helped reestablish the department and proud of the professionalism and dedication of the men and women who serve within it. As he transitions into retirement after more than 45 years in law enforcement, he expressed confidence in the department's future and in Deputy Chief Christopher Vaughn's leadership.

Following Ellis' retirement, Deputy Police Chief Christopher Vaughn will assume the role of Police Chief. Vaughn, who brings 24 years of law enforcement experience and a broad range of public safety training and credentials, has worked alongside Ellis for the past five years, helping strengthen the department's



operations, standards, and community focus. City leaders say this partnership has made the transition a natural next step.

Vaughn said he looks forward to continuing the work already underway and advancing the department's public safety goals. He expressed appreciation for Ellis' mentorship and leadership over the years and shared his commitment to serving the Bessemer City community and the officers of BCPD with the same dedication and professionalism.

City leadership emphasized both gratitude and confidence during the announcement. Mayor Becky S. Smith noted that the City is thankful for Ellis' service and the strong foundation he built, while also expressing excitement about Vaughn stepping into the role and continuing the high level of protection and service residents expect. City Manager Josh Ross echoed those sentiments, recognizing Ellis' integrity and leadership while highlighting Vaughn's experience and readiness to guide the department forward.

The City of Bessemer City extends its sincere appreciation to Chief Ellis for his decades of service and lasting contributions to the community. With this transition, City officials say BCPD remains well-positioned to move forward while continuing the legacy of professionalism established over the past decade.

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