Cesar Ramirez, 71, has passed away

By Nancy Chapman  3 : 29 pm EST January 21 2020

Updated, 4 a.m. Thursday: Funeral arrangements.

NORWALK, Conn. — Cesar Ramirez has died.

Ramirez was a Norwalk Police Officer for 32 years and served on the Norwalk Housing Authority since 1992. He was NHA chairman.

Norwalk Police Tweeted the news at 2:53 p.m. Monday:

“It is with great sadness that the Norwalk Police Department announces the passing of Officer Cesar Ramirez after a courageous battle with cancer.
Norwalk Police Officer Cesar Ramirez handles traffic at the intersection of Main Avenue and the Merritt Parkway in 2016. (File photo)

Please keep his family in your thoughts and prayers.”

“Cesar Ramirez was a really special person and Norwalk Police Officer. This is a great loss for our Norwalk Police family. It was my honor to know him well,” Mayor Harry Rilling said Tuesday afternoon in a statement.

“With Officer Ramirez’s passing, our multi-cultural community has been left without his guidance, but with a perfect example of all that is good, decent, and necessary in a human being,” Lucia Rilling said in a statement.

Ramirez, 71, joined the NPD in 1987, after seven years with the New York City Police Department. In August 2016 he received a Community Policing Award from the U.S. Attorney’s Office, and was named Officer of the Month for organizing a vigil honoring five murdered Dallas Police officers.

“We are all heartbroken over his loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time. Cesar serves as an example for all of us and a pillar in the community. He epitomized a public servant and a community police officer,” Police Chief Thomas Kulhawik said in an email.

Ramirez led the Housing Authority as it developed plans to rebuild Washington Village, then the oldest public housing project in Connecticut and possibly the nation. The Authority secured a $30 million United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhoods Initiative grant in support of the effort and Phase I of the Washington Village replacement, Soundview Landing, opened in mid-2018.

He was also a long-standing member of the Republican Town Committee.

“Cesar will be deeply missed in the community,” Republican State Central Committee member Kelly Straniti, a Norwalk Police Commissioner, said.
“We’ve been grateful to have him as a member of the RTC for so many years and as such a fixture in Norwalk. His smile and warmth was something that made everyone feel good. We’re incredibly saddened by the loss of such a good man who gave so much, and gave so happily and freely because he cared from the bottom of his heart.”

In December, after being diagnosed with cancer, Ramirez said that in his long career as a police officer he always tried to find the good in people he encountered, even in situations where he was enforcing the law. He said he believed every person deserved to be treated with respect, regardless of their circumstances in life.

He was honored by Norwalk Police on Dec. 13, in a warm, poignant send-off marked by calls of “We love you.”

“I still believe God does things for a reason,” said Ramirez.

Rilling gave him a key to the city, calling it a special honor that “very, very few people” have received. “What grace, what courage, and the way you have lived your life,” Rilling said. “You’re an inspiration to us all.”

“Just care for each other,” Ramirez said. “Respect each other as you like to be respected. Do anything without expecting anything in return.”

“My thoughts go out to Cesar’s wife Ana, their children and their grandchildren,” State Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff (D-25) said in a statement. “Cesar was loved by all and one of the finest of the finest in the Norwalk Police Department. I am glad we all were able to have a ceremony with Cesar, his family, and the community last month to honor his over three decades of service. We will miss you, Cesar.”

“I admired Cesar’s respect, dignity, and faith, both for himself and toward others. His kind and gentle ways were meaningful and, most of all, an important trait he possessed,” Lucia Rilling said.
Rilling’s statement said:

“He cared deeply about the community he served. He was a dedicated public servant in every sense of the word. His passing is a huge loss for our city which I know he loved dearly. It is a sad day in Norwalk, but I know his legacy will live on through the programs he started and the difference he made in the lives of residents.

“All of Norwalk mourns with his family during these sad times.”

On Wednesday, Lt. Terrance Blake announced funeral arrangements:

- Calling hours at St. Matthews Church, 216 Scribner Ave., Monday, Jan. 27 from 3 to 7 p.m.
- The funeral service will be held at St. Matthews Church, 216 Scribner Ave., at 10 a.m. on Tuesday Jan. 28, with burial to follow at St. John’s Cemetery, 223 Richards Ave.

*This story was updated multiple times after it was initially posted, to add comments from community leaders.*