

March 1, 2020

Mike Sykes, City Manager
City of Scappoose
33568 E. Columbia Ave
Scappoose, OR 97056

Dear Mike:

Since we have been unable to connect to sit and talk, I am submitting here in writing the overall topic of that conversation I wanted to have with you in person. As you know, I applied for the Police Lieutenant position and was subsequently selected and hired into that position effective August 1, 2019. Reflecting back over the hiring process and the seven months I have been in the position, I can assure you that the position I hold is in fact not what I was lead to believe the position would be throughout the hiring process. I understood at the time I accepted employment that staffing was a challenge within the Scappoose Police Department as a couple police officers had recently left for other police agency employment and a couple sworn personnel had left under adverse conditions that were publicized in the media. I was told that the Scappoose Police department would be in a re-building phase and I was selected to have a part in that as the city wanted to move to the future and away from the negativity and "drama" that had just taken place within the police department.

When I came to work for the City of Scappoose, I was VERY excited about the opportunity as it looked to be what I was looking for; a position to make a positive difference and a community I truly intended to assimilate into. I have grown to really like this community and the quality of life here and I have grown fond of your style of leadership and what you have and are accomplishing here. I also very much enjoy working with the other city department personnel, the surrounding political subdivisions and community members. However, although I came here with lots of excitement, exuberance, and intent, the overall atmosphere created by the executive manager of the police department and how he treats me is unacceptable and leading me to consider other employment options.

I do not know if the situation can be fixed or not, but I wanted to meet with you and offer anything I could do to make that happen for the benefit of the community we serve. If this is not possible, then I need to consider all options as my current work environment is surrounded in a darkness and negativity, I view, created by Chief Miller.

It is clear to me that Norm Miller did not want me to come to work with the Scappoose Police Department. Further, I have come to suspect Norm did not want to resurrect and staff the historic position of lieutenant which he had vacated and kept dormant for some five years I understand. I previously was employed with several police agencies over my career and know exactly what a "number two's" role is to a police chief; to help the chief, be an extension of the chief, and to support the chief. Norm never allowed this to happen. Norm has made it so he and I effectively have no working relationship, almost no communication, and, at best, he appears to sporadically tolerate my very presence. There was basically no indoctrination, training, described expectations, equipping of tools or acceptance of me or my role by Norm.

I know previously you and I had cursory chats about the challenges with Norm and you thought he would “come around”, but the situation has only continued to deteriorate from those chats. My work environment has become negative, demeaning and even somewhat hostile and the job description I was hired under is only on paper. I have never been empowered, trusted, or awarded any managerial authority or decision making, yet Norm wants to hold me accountable with none of the tools for success to my avail. I have heard from multiple sources words to the effect that ‘Norm is either trying to make Jim’s work life so miserable that he just leaves or he is trying to set him up for failure’. At this point, I agree with this assessment. It is my current opinion that you hired me and not Norm and that you were trying to fill a void within the department, but that Norm is not accepting of what I believe you were trying to accomplish.

When I came to Scappoose I was excited to help the organization get back on its feet and move forward and for me to partner with Norm and to become an extension of him in leading and managing this department. Seven months later I basically just exist 40 hour per week as a Scappoose police department member in an agency that is not flourishing. I have personally heard from multiple people that originally there was department excitement that my arrival at Scappoose along with Justin Stevenson’s would bring some new perspective, energy, and change for the better. Any change we would have brought has been completely stifled and untapped.

Issues/situations I have seen or have knowledge of relating to Norm Miller include:

- Lack of leadership
- Lack of communication
- Disparaging and Retaliatory treatment
- Uttered Sexist Remark
- Unethical Actions
- Non Adherence to and a general disdain of the CBA
- Belittling of subordinates
- Absenteeism

Mike, my intent here is solely to communicate to you that I believe there are problems in the police department as a result of the executive leadership and that, as things are, the “role” I have been given and the work atmosphere is not sustainable. I am very dedicated to you and your mission as City Manager and I have the highest respect for you. As the City Manager, I felt it completely necessary and appropriate to communicate directly with you on the reality of my work environment. Nobody else has read this letter and I had wanted to speak with you in person, but as I mentioned that opportunity has continued to be evasive for some time now. If there is anything you believe I could do to improve the police department and my working environment, I am always available to you. Lastly, I would encourage you to seek out comment and input from the entire police department in order to better understand the current atmosphere within it.

Sincerely,



James Macfarlane
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