

June 21, 2023

To whom it may concern,

On Monday June 19, 2023, the Burton Police Command officers sent out a letter of no confidence in myself as Chief of Police. This comes at the tail end of a set of investigations into my actions and the actions of members of the Police Command unit.

When I was appointed as Chief of Police, there was a need to change the culture of the department. While most of the officers took the changes well, some officers resisted. I have had to demote a Sergeant that covered up a crime for a fellow member of law enforcement. I have charged two officers with criminal offences. I have conducted an investigation into a senior Sergeant and a senior Officer, which led to their resignations, for workplace harassment and facilitating an affair while on duty. My actions were not favored by some members of the department. However, no one is above the law and the community deserves a Chief that will take action and not adhere to the good old boy system. Integrity is more important than popularity.

The Burton Police Department is filled with excellent police officers. Some of those officers had to leave because the pay was not equitable to other departments. To keep and maintain officers, myself and Mayor Duane Haskins secured a significant raise to bring the officers to parity. Due to the number of new officers, the field training program had to be modified. The new officers were being trained by officers that had less than 2 years of seniority; this is not ideal. I changed the process to have the Sergeants train the new officers in their final phase of training. I also allowed those with previous police experience to be removed from training early if they have proven their ability to be on solo patrol.

A minority female officer made a complaint about sexual harassment. The command officer she made the complaint to did not take it seriously and did not properly address the complaint. I stood up for this officer and affirmed her complaint to help ensure the complaint was addressed properly. The command officer still disregarded her complaint and then filed his own complaint on her and myself for sexual harassment. The command officer added several other charges to his complaint, including a complaint on a second minority female. An investigation was conducted by an impartial outside entity. The investigation cleared myself and the female officers of any wrongdoing. While the allegations were false, they had already spread throughout the department and across the county.

These false allegations have ruined the reputation of several people. Due to this, an officer sent an email in response to the promotion of one of the affected parties. The email was defamatory and in a clear attempt to harass a fellow employee. The Lieutenant was told to send that employee home and report to work the next day for an internal interview. The Lieutenant was not assigned to conduct the internal interview because he was under investigation for matters related to that incident which produced a conflict of interest.

During the investigation into myself, the investigator discovered actions of Command staff that needed to be investigated. There is currently an ongoing investigation by the impartial outside entity.

The Command union is in contract negotiations. That, along with by the possibility of discipline, has provoked the union to issue the letter of no confidence. I expect the officers' union to show solidarity with the command union and submit their own letter soon.

Employees have the right to a harassment free workplace and equal treatment no matter their age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or creed. I will continue to fight for all of the employees no matter the attacks that I have endured, and may continue to endure.

My focus is and will always be on the residents of the City of Burton. I will not allow this to diminish the hard work of the officers or the services that they provide. The safety and security of our residents and businesses is my number one priority.

Yours Truly,

Chief Brian Ross
Burton Police Department