

NLPD Officer and Sergeants Union

March 29th, 2024

**Reference:** Media Release

To media members and the North Liberty community,

On Sunday, March 24th 2024 the North Liberty Police Department Officers Union and Sergeants Union held a joint meeting with all sworn officers and sergeants to address growing and consistent concerns within the North Liberty Police Department in reference to the working environment and conditions of the department. We wish to bring to the public's attention our serious concerns regarding the leadership of Chief Diane Venenga.

After careful consideration and reflection on the state of our department, we found it necessary to complete a survey that addressed the capability of the department's management to adequately lead the organization and provide satisfactory and safe working conditions, (results attached). Following the survey, a vote was held and yielded a unanimous decision of *no confidence* for Chief Diane Venenga and her ability to lead our department.

Both unions felt this *no confidence* vote was necessary after a multitude of attempts throughout several years had yielded no results in regard to correcting issues within the department. These unsuccessful efforts included formal, informal, verbal, and written communication with all parties involved. For example, a November 2017 survey outlined the grievances and issues expressed by department members. This survey opened the door to further communication on the topics. Chief Venenga vowed to bring positive changes and improved working conditions to the department, however no adjustments or revisions were made and those who voiced questions regarding the situation were often met with hostility and retaliation from Chief Venenga.

Grievances from members of the department include, but are not limited to (and in no particular order):

1. Poor communication
  - 1.1. Not effectively communicating major decisions or properly guiding members with new, vague rules
2. Hypocritical decision making and enforcement of departmental policy
  - 2.1. Favoritism in said areas
3. Decision making based off of emotion and hearsay without regard for factual information or level-headedness.
4. Refusal to receive or provide input in decision making
  - 4.1. Refusal to coordinate or receive input from specialized duty instructors and experts in the field

5. Refusal to take ownership of mistakes
  - 5.1. Blaming others for said mistakes
6. Jeopardizing specialty assignment certifications, therefore increasing liability to the department/city by forgoing mandatory training to prevent overtime and related costs
  - 6.1. Requiring non-certified members of said assignments to continue their involvement in said assignment
  - 6.2. Publicly boasting having the highest standards in training while enforcing these practices
7. Informal “secret discipline” against officers without the officers knowledge and/or ability to fairly refute such claims with due process
8. Unsafe working conditions due to delegation of staffing
  - 8.1. Requiring undercover DTF agent to work patrol
  - 8.2. Unclear shift minimums and no clear understanding of policy
9. Restrictive and ambiguous time off policies related to punishment of the employee body
  - 9.1. A Refusal to work with the employee body on this issue
  - 9.2. Harassment for use of accumulated leave
  - 9.3. Hypocritical use of benefits/ leave
10. The inability to hire and retain officers reducing the ability to maintain the safety of the citizens of North Liberty
  - 10.1. This has also required the removal and restriction of involvement in crucial areas such as the Dive Team, Bomb Squad, Hostage Negotiations, etc.
  - 10.2. Chief Venenga has shown a complete lack of interest in fixing these issues with a growing number of officers accepting other employment and additional officers currently participating in the hiring process of other agencies/professions.
11. Time mismanagement due to her board appointment at the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy favoring the needs of the academy over the needs of the department and city of North Liberty while being compensated by the city.
12. A disconnect from the rest of the department as it relates to job related duties, personal lives, mental health, and officer safety
  - 12.1. Representing herself as a working member of patrol to the city council, having not followed through.
13. Shown and self-verbalized vindictiveness and disdain towards her employees
14. A lack of trust from the employee body
15. Refusal to address noted issues and receiving them with hostility
16. Retaliatory practices against union members

After serving Chief Venenga and the North Liberty City Council with the results of the no confidence vote and requesting contact to address the matter, members are being treated with continued sarcasm and hostility, leading to many accepting and additional others seeking employment outside the city of North Liberty. The consequences of multiple departures will

undoubtedly cause a negative impact on the ability for the officers of the North Liberty Police Department to provide efficient safety and services to the community.

Despite our best efforts to work collaboratively and constructively, the leadership has consistently fallen short of the standards expected of a police chief. We believe that the continued tenure of Chief Venenga jeopardizes the integrity and effectiveness of our department and undermines public trust in law enforcement.

It is indisputable that Chief Venenga has had numerous opportunities but has made no attempt to invoke positive changes within the department. She has failed the department, the North Liberty City Council, and the citizens of the community.

It is our duty to serve and protect our community to the best of our abilities, and we believe that a change in leadership is necessary to uphold these principles. We call on the North Liberty City Council to take immediate action in addressing our concerns and restoring faith in the department we love.

We urge the members of the public to support our efforts to ensure accountability and transparency within our law enforcement agency. The trust and confidence of the community are essential in our mission to uphold justice and maintain public safety.

Sincerely,

The Officers and Sergeants of the North Liberty Police Department

**2024 Survey Results:**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b><u>How would you rate the morale of the department?</u></b>	<b><u>5 (25%)</u></b>	<b><u>8 (40%)</u></b>	<b><u>4 (20%)</u></b>		<b><u>1 (5%)</u></b>					
<b><u>(Average score 1.9, without high/low outlier = 1.1)</u></b>										
	<b><u>Would Not</u></b>	<b><u>Might</u></b>	<b><u>Would</u></b>							
<b><u>How likely would you recommend NLPD to others?</u></b>	<b><u>16 (80%)</u></b>	<b><u>4 (20%)</u></b>								
	<b><u>Have</u></b>									
	<b><u>Applied</u></b>	<b><u>Looking</u></b>	<b><u>Not</u></b>	<b><u>Most Likely</u></b>	<b><u>No plans</u></b>					
	<b><u>Elsewhere</u></b>	<b><u>Elsewhere</u></b>	<b><u>Likely</u></b>	<b><u>Will Stay</u></b>	<b><u>to leave</u></b>					
<b><u>How likely are you to stay at NLPD over next 5 years?</u></b>	<b><u>5 (25%)</u></b>	<b><u>7 (35%)</u></b>	<b><u>5 (25%)</u></b>	<b><u>3 (15%)</u></b>						
<b><u>Rate Chief Venenga's leadership skills per category</u></b>	<b><u>1</u></b>	<b><u>2</u></b>	<b><u>3</u></b>	<b><u>4</u></b>	<b><u>5</u></b>	<b><u>N/A</u></b>				
<b><u>1=Poor/ Don't Agree, 5=Excellent/ Agree (Questions 13-25 not answered on one survey)</u></b>										
<b><u>Communication</u></b>	<b><u>14 (70%)</u></b>	<b><u>4 (20%)</u></b>	<b><u>1 (5%)</u></b>	<b><u>1 (5%)</u></b>						
<b><u>Follow Through</u></b>	<b><u>6 (30%)</u></b>	<b><u>11 (55%)</u></b>	<b><u>3 (15%)</u></b>							
<b><u>Trustworthiness</u></b>	<b><u>15 (75%)</u></b>	<b><u>4 (20%)</u></b>	<b><u>1 (5%)</u></b>							
<b><u>Leadership</u></b>	<b><u>15 (75%)</u></b>	<b><u>5 (25%)</u></b>								
<b><u>Availability During Work Hours</u></b>	<b><u>6 (30%)</u></b>	<b><u>8 (40%)</u></b>	<b><u>2 (10%)</u></b>	<b><u>3 (15%)</u></b>					<b><u>1 (5%)</u></b>	
<b><u>Availability Outside Work Hours</u></b>	<b><u>8 (40%)</u></b>	<b><u>7 (35%)</u></b>	<b><u>4 (20%)</u></b>						<b><u>1 (5%)</u></b>	
<b><u>Fairness in Discipline</u></b>	<b><u>12 (60%)</u></b>	<b><u>7 (35%)</u></b>	<b><u>1 (5%)</u></b>							
<b><u>Creating Team Environment</u></b>	<b><u>18 (90%)</u></b>	<b><u>2 (10%)</u></b>								
<b><u>Allowing Input on Decision Making</u></b>	<b><u>16 (80%)</u></b>	<b><u>3 (15%)</u></b>	<b><u>1 (5%)</u></b>							
<b><u>Looks Out for Betterment of NLPD</u></b>	<b><u>15 (75%)</u></b>	<b><u>5 (25%)</u></b>								
<b><u>Cares About Employee Wellness</u></b>	<b><u>17 (85%)</u></b>	<b><u>2 (10%)</u></b>	<b><u>1 (5%)</u></b>							



<u>Do You Feel Your Leadership Decisions Are Supported by Command Staff?</u>	<u>4 (100%)</u>			
<u>Do You Have the Feeling Your Departmental Concerns Fall on Deaf Ears?</u>				<u>4 (100%)</u>
<u>Are You Kept in the Loop of Things Going on Within the Department?</u>	<u>1 (25%)</u>	<u>3 (75%)</u>		
<u>Do You Feel Retaliated Against for Being a Union Member?</u>				<u>4 (100%)</u>
<u>Does Chief Venenga Stay Current with the Mood and Sentiment of Law Enforcement?</u>	<u>4 (100%)</u>			
<u>Are You Confident with Chief Venenga's Hiring Practices and Ability to Choose Best Applicants?</u>	<u>4 (100%)</u>			
<u>Do you Feel Isolated From Command Staff?</u>				<u>4 (100%)</u>