

NEWS

Superior officers accused captain of multiple drunk driving incidents

An investigation into allegations that former Superior police Capt. Chad La Lor had driven drunk prior to a March 2009 accident revealed at least seven incidents in which officers stated they'd heard of or witnessed La Lor driving while drunk dat...



Superior police Capt. Chad La Lor. News Tribune file

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An investigation into allegations that former Superior police Capt. Chad La Lor had driven drunk prior to a March 2009 accident revealed at least seven incidents in which officers stated they'd

The alleged incidents came to light after La Lor was accused of committing perjury during a Superior Police and Fire Commission hearing in November about a fellow officer accused of theft. La Lor was asked during the hearing whether he had driven drunk prior to the March 2009 accident and he said he did not believe he had. A criminal investigation concluded there was not sufficient evidence to prove La Lor was lying, but Police Chief Charles LaGesse said his findings during an internal investigation into the matter revealed La Lor was not truthful with his testimony.

"While it was determined that there was not sufficient evidence to support the criminal charge of perjury, I continue to believe that Chad La Lor was less than forthright," LaGesse said of La Lor's testimony in November.

La Lor now acknowledges that he might have been impaired in two previous incidents uncovered in LaGesse's investigation, but he challenged some of the other accusations by his fellow officers.

"It seems convenient that no one came forward with those accusations at the time of the accident in 2009," La Lor said.

"Instead, my detractors waited until I was involved in the investigation of an officer committing repeated thefts. I then was a primary witness providing testimony against this officer, an officer who by any account was universally well liked on the department. The timing of these allegations couldn't be any more suspect."

Detective Bill Braman III reported La Lor had been very intoxicated and left another officer's retirement party in early 2008 after a detective and his wife tried to get his keys, but other officers who had attended the party didn't recall La Lor being drunk -- including the detective and his wife, interviewed separately, who had no recollection of trying to get La Lor's keys as Braman stated they had.

"A number of the allegations were leveled by one departmental supervisor, at least two instances of which were determined to be

false," La Lor said. "One of his allegations specifically was regarding a long-ago retired officer on the department who was stopped in Sun Prairie and the officer in Sun Prairie lost his job."

The other involved allegations that La Lor was pulled over by a former Superior police officer who since joined the sheriff's department, but according to the officer's statement, he had never stopped La Lor, either as a Superior police officer or a Douglas County Sheriff's deputy.

However, the former captain said there are two incidents revealed in the investigation where he may have been impaired.

In one case, which happened in late-2005 or early-2006, a training officer and recently hired deputy with the Douglas County Sheriff's Department stopped La Lor because he was weaving across the center and fog lines on U.S. Highway 2. When the deputies pulled over the driver and discovered it was La Lor behind the wheel, they allowed him to continue driving home about four miles away, according to their statements to LaGessee.

In another instance, which occurred in the weeks leading up to La Lor's 2009 accident, a Superior police sergeant witnessed La Lor driving erratically through the S-curves near the high school, and followed him along East Second Street before turning off near the Holiday Station in Itasca.

"Sgt. [John] Kiel stated that he didn't stop Capt. La Lor as he didn't want to get involved in the arrest of another cop and of a commander in the department," LaGessee wrote in his report. "He stated that he would have pulled any other vehicle over on suspicion of OMVWI based on how the vehicle was being operated."

La Lor told Washburn County Sheriff Terry Dryden during the criminal investigation that the officers involved in both those incidents were officers he had not had issues with in the past.

"Ultimately, there are two incidents, as I see it from the investigation, where there is the possibility that I was impaired," La Lor said. Still, he told Dryden he had no recollection of being impaired during the incident involving the sheriff's department or of receiving a call from the sergeant during the second, according to a transcript of his meeting with the Washburn County sheriff.

For Dryden, the lack of corroborating evidence in at least seven incidents of driving while intoxicated proved problematic.

"[L]ack of evidence in this matter is significant as no law enforcement officer took enforcement action at the time Captain La Lor was accused of driving while intoxicated," the sheriff wrote in his report. He concluded there was no probable cause or evidence that would satisfy the burden of proof of a criminal perjury charge.

However, LaGesse said there was enough to be concerned about that he would have taken the matter to a Police and Fire Commission hearing had La Lor not resigned because the former captain had lost the respect of many officers following his testimony in November.

"The allegations have a level of merit that I was not comfortable having him serve as a captain, a commander of this department," LaGesse said.

LaGesse said there are issues that will be addressed within the department as a result of this investigation, including better enforcement of departmental policies.

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