

# Independent Investigation into Allegations of Misconduct Involving the Superior Police Department: Collateral and Systemic Issues

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## Overview:

In the spring of 2025, a number of issues emerged from within the Superior Police Department ("SPD" or "the Department") in different contexts – including a complaint, labor grievance, and litigation filed by a then-investigator in the agency named Mikayla LeRette.<sup>1</sup> LeRette's identity as the wife of Chief Paul Winterscheidt was a complicating factor in the various allegations that came to light and the challenges of navigating them appropriately and effectively.

The City of Superior eventually entered into a contract with OIR Group, a police practices group based in California.<sup>2</sup> The driver of that agreement was an interest in addressing the claims raised by Investigator LeRette in different contexts, including her lawsuit and extensive correspondence with the Mayor. That correspondence included detailed challenges to the legitimacy of an administrative investigation that had been conducted in 2024 with her as the subject. It also cited multiple instances of alleged mistreatment that she claimed to have experienced over a period of approximately three years.

Some of those allegations named two current members of SPD, and, if true, involved conduct that potentially violated agency policy and therefore could result in disciplinary consequences. Accordingly, those allegations were compiled and investigated formally as part of OIR Group's scope of work. Those investigations have been completed and presented to the City for review and disposition under separate cover.

Meanwhile, as OIR Group began its work into the allegations raised by Investigator LeRette, the City became aware of a letter that was sent anonymously to retired SPD Chief Nick Alexander. It described a specific incident from several years earlier in which an arrestee had been improperly photographed at the Douglas County Jail while in a compromised position. The alleged perpetrator of that misconduct was Mikalya LeRette. In an effort to respond with due diligence, an investigation into the allegations contained in the anonymous letter was added to the OIR Group scope of work.

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<sup>1</sup> Ms. LeRette voluntarily resigned from SPD in September of 2025.

<sup>2</sup> OIR Group has regularly conducted internal investigations of misconduct and has been otherwise involved in the work of independent oversight of law enforcement on a full-time basis for nearly twenty-five years. It has performed a variety of police investigative and review functions for public entities in California and several other states. More information about the company is available at its website, [www.oirgroup.com](http://www.oirgroup.com)

OIR Group's review, analysis, and findings with regard to different components of the aforementioned issues comprise the contents of this Report. It is divided into five separate sections.

The first responds to Ms. LeRette's assertion that the administrative investigation conducted by outside investigator Daniel Hardman was fatally flawed. Hardman, a retired law enforcement executive from another agency, had been selected by City officials to handle accusations of time theft that emerged against then-Investigator LeRette in the spring of 2024, when she was newly assigned to a task force in Duluth, Minnesota. He had reached the conclusion that allegations of various forms of misconduct were substantiated by the evidence. She, for her part, disputed that core finding and took exception to Hardman's very selection as investigator, as well as his methodology and interpretation of evidence.

Our report is not a "re-investigation" into the initial allegations against LeRette. Instead, it assesses the soundness of Hardman's investigative approach and questions the viability of the conclusions reached in relation to the accumulated evidence. It also includes a recommendation encouraging SPD to further clarify – and commit to policy – its expectations for personnel working special assignments.

The second section below recounts our investigation into the misconduct alleged by the anonymous complaint against Ms. LeRette that was received by the City via former Chief Alexander. As we explain, the investigation failed to substantiate the allegation.

The third section below addresses the GPS tracker that was placed on then-Investigator LeRette's work vehicle by (now-retired) Captain Tom Champaigne in order to further his inquiry into possible timekeeping misconduct. The legality of that action has been challenged, and is assessed here.

The fourth section focuses on the impact of nepotism concerns arising from Investigator LeRette's marriage to the Chief of Police. That relationship complicated the initial investigation into her conduct, as well as its resolution and different aspects of its aftermath. Accordingly, it showed the importance of developing new guidelines for the future.

The final brief section is related: it encourages the City to explore and establish an alternative method for addressing the disposition of administrative investigations from which the Chief of Police should be recused.

## I. Allegation of Bias and Other Defects in First Administrative Investigation

Then-Investigator LeRette made a number of allegations regarding the internal investigation commissioned by the City of Superior into allegations of time theft. Daniel Hardman, the outside investigator assigned to the matter, recognized some of the challenges in investigating LeRette, given that she was assigned to the Duluth Narcotics Task Force during the questioned time; this meant she was both geographically remote and working in a role that was inherently flexible. Even so, the investigator attempted to determine the accuracy of LeRette's timekeeping by comparing her time sheets with other information tracking her whereabouts.

The data used for comparison included a review of key fob that LeRette had been issued, which tracked time of entry and departure into the Duluth task force building and the Superior Police Department. He also assessed log ins and log outs of LeRette's work computer.

This information was obviously relevant. However, there are limits to the conclusions that validly could be drawn from it. This is because these electronic records did not necessarily capture all of the times that LeRette came into either the Duluth or Superior workspaces. As LeRette herself pointed out, it would not be uncommon to enter one of these buildings at the same time as a co-worker, and use that person's key access to gain admittance. The data was also not able to fully take into account times in which LeRette may have been working at off-site locations, or conducting other work-related business on the way to the Duluth location. Such activity (which LeRette asserted as regularly occurring) would constitute appropriate performance of duty even if not reflected in concretely verifiable data trackers.

The investigation is also notable in that with the exception of LeRette, none of the interviews conducted by the outside investigator were recorded. Best practices demand that internal investigations of these serious allegations be recorded for the sake of accurate memorialization. And that failure to record had implications in this case; several witnesses we talked with expressed concern that the summaries prepared by the investigator did not accurately portray what they told him, or had characterized their statements in misleading ways. For example, both SPD Investigator Tim Monte and Duluth Police Sergeant Rodney Wilson expressed concerns about the accuracy of their statement summaries compiled by the outside investigator.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Another investigative technique used by investigators when a recording is not feasible is to prepare a summary of the witness' statement and provide it to the witness for review and

As for the choice of investigator, it was appropriate to assign the matter to an outside party in light of the familial relationship between the Chief and LeRette. We also did not consider Mr. Hardman's alleged prior acquaintance with Superior city officials or current or former Department members to be incompatible with suitability for the assignment, despite Investigator LeRette later citing his attendance at a retirement party in Superior as problematic.

However, for one interview (with a supervisor from another agency) the investigator made the choice to allow an SPD Captain to sit in on the interview and ask questions. This undermined the independence sought by the city – but from the other direction. Rather than an undue influence created by the Chief, the involvement by the captain created a perception that LeRette's accusers were attempting to shape the investigation unduly. That captain later explained his participation to us in an interview, saying that the interview subject was a person whom he knew professionally, and that his presence was meant to provide familiarity in an unusual context. It is thus ironic that it ended up prompting suspicion instead; either way, better practice would have been to avoid the dynamic.

In addition to these concerns, the most significant defect in the investigation was that LeRette was interviewed about her comings and goings for particular dates that preceded the interview by several months. And per the investigator's direction, LeRette was not able to access her computer for emails or other materials in order to refresh her recollection about what she might have been doing on any particular workday.<sup>4</sup> As a result, LeRette had to rely mostly on memory on when she was working and when she was not.<sup>5</sup>

To the extent she had difficulty in doing so, those gaps or uncertainties lent themselves to different interpretations. The investigator ultimately surmised that LeRette was being "deceptive," in large part due to skepticism about her professed inability to account for her activity on specific dates and times that were in question. But we are doubtful about the conclusiveness of that finding.

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feedback to avoid later claims of inaccuracy. However, this technique was not utilized by the investigator.

<sup>4</sup> According to a texting stream between city representatives and the outside investigator, the city had initially agreed with LeRette's request to give her access to her email account so that she could prepare for the subject interview. However, because the outside investigator expressed objection, LeRette was not provided such access.

<sup>5</sup> We have been advised that LeRette did have access to her work calendar during the interview.

It is very difficult to prove that an individual is making a false statement when they assert that they cannot recall an event that occurred months earlier, especially when it is not a particularly noteworthy incident. Yet the investigator found that there was sufficient evidence to find that LeRette violated SPD policy relating to making false statements. While a “failure to recall” may be received by some as indicia of deception, it may also simply be a “failure to recall”. Accordingly, the perception of deceptiveness articulated by the investigator in his report was insufficient evidence to establish that LeRette made false statements during her internal interview.

We noted other issues with the investigation. In his investigative report, the investigator indicated that he was “curious” how it was learned that he would be conducting the investigation and if someone had leaked that information. The identity of the investigator should not have been considered a secret, and even if a witness had shared that identity with LeRette, it would not have been a violation of policy and was irrelevant to the allegations at issue. Therefore, the preoccupation with this point was both an oddity and a distraction.

Additionally, the investigator found that LeRette violated at least six separate policies but did not explain how the facts support each alleged violation. For example, one violation cited was Policy 320.3 Duty to Obey Lawful Orders. But there is no further analysis as to how LeRette violated this particular policy.

Finally, and perhaps most fundamentally, we noted vagaries and inconsistent approaches to direction and guidance provided to SPD investigators and detectives over the years about the degree of flexibility they might have regarding their work schedule.<sup>6</sup> The fluctuating expectations regarding providing notice and/or requiring supervisor approval for adjusting a schedule make it difficult to articulate with certainty what those expectations are and to hold accountable those who may not sufficiently keep supervisors abreast of their actual working hours.

In conclusion, it well may have been the case that LeRette did not work all of the hours that she submitted on her time sheets.<sup>7</sup> However, the actual evidence developed

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<sup>6</sup> To be fair, SPD did endeavor to more clearly set out work, notice, and time adjustment expectations in the Spring of 2024. That notice could be the start of a more robust policy that we recommend below.

<sup>7</sup> Certainly, a current and former captain and investigator Hardman all had concerns about the way in which LeRette tracked her time and her failure to provide timely notice when she wanted to adjust time. For example, then-Captain Harriman became concerned when he reviewed LeRette’s time schedule just before she went on [REDACTED] leave, questioned her about it, and then received an acknowledgement from LeRette that the time was inaccurately entered. And even LeRette acknowledged in her letter to the Mayor that she could have been more diligent with regard to understanding those requirements and communicating to her superiors after new

initially by SPD and then by the outside investigator did not establish by a preponderance of the evidence that LeRette committed time theft or any other violations of SPD policy.

Going forward it would be helpful for SPD to more clearly set out its expectations in writing for detectives and investigators work schedule. That would include at a minimum the following guidance:

- Whether SPD allows adjustments in work schedule and, if so, how an employee should seek such an adjustment
- Whether SPD allows employees to work remotely and if so, how an employee should seek such approval
- Whether SPD requires the employees to prepare a log setting out their investigative work, and if so, guidance on how the log is prepared, submitted, and maintained.

**RECOMMENDATION:** SPD should develop clear written policies for detectives and investigators relating to accounting, adjusting, and submission and approval mechanisms of their work hours.

## II. Anonymous Allegation: Inappropriate Sharing of Photograph

### Factual Background

During the pendency of the investigation into former Investigator LeRette's allegations, former **Chief Nicholas Alexander** received an anonymous letter in the mail. The letter alleged that approximately 6-8 years ago, while then Officer LeRette was working as a patrol officer on the night shift, she was present during a booking at the Douglas County Jail when a man described as mentally challenged was brought into the jail. According to the letter, this male was observed with his pants and underwear hanging down, exposing his buttocks. The letter alleged Officer LeRette used her cell phone to take a

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notice and tracking expectations were disseminated in the Spring of 2024. However, these acknowledgements fell well short of proving violations of timecard theft.

photograph of the man in this exposed condition, as observed by then-Douglas County Jail Sergeant Russ Milroy.<sup>8</sup>

The letter advised that Officer LeRette then posted this photograph to people in a social media chat group, including fellow officers and the Communication Center staff on duty that night. The letter noted that Officer LeRette's immediate supervisors that night were then-Sergeant Jon McKinnon and then-Sergeant Paul Winterscheidt. According to the letter, the photos were sent via an app (thought to be Snapchat) that allows a person to view the picture before it automatically erases after a few seconds. The letter reports that a then-Communication Center employee, Amy Pullen, observed this photo and found it offensive and inappropriate. According to the letter, Pullen took a screenshot of the photo before it could erase.

The letter reported that once the screenshot was taken, LeRette was able to learn that Pullen had taken a screenshot. According to the letter, Officer LeRette went to Pullen and asked her to erase the picture. The letter indicated that Pullen told LeRette that she had erased this photo, when in fact she had not done so.

The letter advised that Sergeant Milroy informed the Superior Police Department sergeants on duty of Officer LeRette's conduct. According to the letter, since Sergeant Winterscheidt was currently dating Officer LeRette, Sergeant McKinnon interviewed Officer LeRette about the incident. According to the letter, Officer LeRette admitted to Sergeant McKinnon that she had taken the photo and shared it without knowledge or consent of the arrestee.

The letter advised that the action was in direct violation of Wisconsin criminal statute 942.09(4): criminal distribution of sexually explicit images, which is posting, publishing, or causing to be posted or published a private representation if the actor knows that the person depicted does not consent to the posting or publication of the private representation.

Upon receipt of the letter, former Chief Alexander telephoned out to Amy Pullen, who was no longer living in the area. Ms. Pullen corroborated some of the allegations contained in the letter. Alexander then contacted City representatives and provided the letter as well as the circumstances surrounding receipt. That letter and the surrounding details were provided to us by City representatives and the former Chief.

We were further advised that per Mayor Paine's directive, we were asked to include these allegations as part of our investigative scope of work.

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<sup>8</sup> A copy of the letter is attached to this report as Exhibit 1.

We then spoke with Amy Pullen via Teams on June 30, 2025.<sup>9</sup> The call was audio-recorded. In sum, Ms. Pullen advised that she was a 911 dispatcher employed by Douglas County from 2014 until the summer of 2021. Pullen worked from the basement of the government center.

Pullen recalled receiving a photograph via Snapchat in approximately 2017. The photograph was of a male, possibly white, possibly intoxicated, being booked. She characterized the man as "disheveled" in appearance, but did not remember any nudity. The photograph was taken from the point of view of the back of the subject.

Pullen stated she took a screenshot of the photo. Pullen did not remember how she was added to the officer's Snapchat list (or if Pullen herself had added the officer to her own list).

Pullen recalled that she worked the night shift, which ran from 6PM to 6AM and the incident happened "late at night." When she received the photograph, Pullen questioned her dispatch partner as to its appropriateness. She did not remember to whom she said this, but it could have been Ashley Engleman, a woman named Caroline whose last name she doesn't recall, or Kaitlyn Cadigan.

Then-Officer Mikayla Larette was on duty that night and she came to the communications center and asked Amy Pullen to delete the screenshot of the Snapchat photo. Pullen said that LeRette was alerted via Snapchat that Pullen had taken a screenshot. Pullen stated that she and LeRette did not have a close relationship and did not normally communicate via Snapchat. Pullen stated: "I think she sent it out and it may have gone to the wrong people."

Pullen said that no one else from the Superior Police Department, including John McKinnon and Paul Winterscheidt, spoke to Pullen about this. Both McKinnon and Winterscheidt were on duty that night.

Pullen recalled that Sergeant Russ Millroy was on street patrol at the time but she had little interaction with him and doesn't recall speaking with him about the photo.

Pullen stated that she had heard nothing about the photo until a recent phone call from retired police chief Nick Alexander. Pullen said that she never received anything similar from LeRette, nor had they discussed the incident later.

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<sup>9</sup> A written summary of that interview is attached as Exhibit 2.

When asked specifically about the photo, Pullen stated that it was taken in jail, at the booking station. She could not remember any text accompanying the photo.

Pullen stated that LeRette did not provide any context to the photo when she came to Pullen at the dispatcher station. Pullen's chief memory was of being surprised that LeRette knew she had taken a screenshot.

Pullen said that she had deleted the photo at LeRette's request. She does not have a copy.

On July 8, we interviewed Russ Milroy in person at the Government Center in Superior, Wisconsin.<sup>10</sup> He advised that he is currently employed by the Superior Police Department. Milroy further advised that he previously worked as a jail sergeant from 2013-2017 for the Douglas County Sheriff's Department. He then accepted a position with SPD.

Milroy recalled an incident involving the arrest and booking of a detainee and a photograph taken of the detainee. He also recalled the subsequent transmission of a photograph but did not remember, a name, a date, nor what the image looked like. The image was possibly sent through Snapchat.

Milroy indicated that the photograph was sent to other people. Milroy said he could not recall what action he may have taken, but typically he would have contacted the SPD patrol sergeant. Milroy said the person he contacted may have been Paul Winterscheidt. Milroy reported that he has no documentation of having done this.

Milroy stated that he could not remember how he became aware of the incident. He did not have Snapchat at the time, so he did not receive the photo. Milroy said he had some recollection that then Officer LeRette may have been the person who took a photograph. Milroy said that LeRette was either the arresting officer or assisting the arresting officer. Milroy also said it was possible that he may have witnessed the photograph being taken or talked to a person who received it. Milroy recalled the person being male but could not remember anything else about his appearance.

Milroy said that he reported the incident to SPD because no one should be taking snapshots of detainees. Milroy said he received no feedback about the incident.

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<sup>10</sup> A written summary of that interview is attached as Exhibit 3.

On July 9, 2025, we interviewed John McKinnon in person at the Government Center in Superior, Wisconsin.<sup>11</sup> The interview was audio recorded and provides a verbatim account of the incident. In summary, McKinnon advised that he is a retired sergeant for the Superior Police Department. McKinnon was hired in 1992 and promoted to sergeant in 2016.

McKinnon said he recalled being advised by a jail staff person from Douglas County that an inappropriate photograph had been taken. McKinnon said he had heard that a jail supervisor was not happy about the incident and had addressed it.

McKinnon said he could not recall seeing the photo but remembered hearing that the person was in a “compromised position”.

McKinnon indicated that he was a direct supervisor of then Officer LeRette in 2016, but she later went to another crew.

McKinnon said that had he been told about it, he would have, at minimum, had a conversation and/or administered verbal counselling to the person who took and shared the photo. He also would have passed the information up to his superiors. He answered to John Kiel and Matt Markon.

McKinnon said that he never heard of any follow up conversation about the incident.

On July 25, 2025, we conducted a Teams interview of Griffith Coffmann. The interview was recorded.<sup>12</sup> To summarize, he advised that he was hired by SPD in April 2013. He was selected to be a Detective four years ago.

Coffman said that he vaguely remembered receiving a photo on Snapchat several years ago. The photo was taken inside the Douglas County Jail. It was sent to him directly from then Officer LeRette.

Coffman said it was a photo of someone in custody. He recognized the booking counter of the jail. He was a patrol officer when this happened but he does not know if he was on duty when he received the photograph.

Coffman said that he did not discuss this photo with anyone at the time. Coffman advised that he was recently reminded of the incident by Russ Milroy who told Coffman he’d been questioned about a photograph from about 10 years ago. This remark refreshed Coffman’s recollection of the incident.

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<sup>11</sup> A written summary of that interview is attached as Exhibit 4.

<sup>12</sup> A written summary of the interview is included as Exhibit 5.

Coffman recalled that Coffman was told that the Association representing SPD officers had filed a complaint regarding Winterscheidt's and LeRette's relationship and that Coffman was asked to provide a brief statement about a conversation surrounding that issue.

With respect to the photograph, Coffman said that he has not thought about it in the intervening years until it was mentioned by Milroy. Coffman cannot remember if it was sent to him directly or as part of a group. Coffman said that he has been on groups on the platform. They are mostly social, frequently shift-based.

Coffman said that his impression upon receiving the photo was "I don't think we can do that." He never received any other photos of people in the jail. It was odd.

When asked if the subject of the photo was nude or partially nude, Coffman said that he couldn't recall. He did not take any action after receiving the photo. The fact that he remembers the incident suggested to Coffman that the incident was unusual. Coffman said that he did not have the photograph on his phone.

On August 4, 2025, Investigator Gennaco spoke telephonically with Kaitlyn Cadigan, who had been cited by another witness as a potential source of information. This conversation, which Investigator Gennaco intended as introductory in nature and the prelude to a more formal interview, was not recorded. Ms. Cadigan advised that she had worked as a dispatcher for Douglas County from 2013 to 2021. She recalled an incident involving a subject named [REDACTED] where photos were taken of him and then shared over social media. Ms. Cadigan further advised that the person who sent the photos over social media was Officer Mikayla LeRette. According to Ms. Cadigan, the photos showed [REDACTED] with facial injuries. Cadigan recalled it appeared as if the photos had been taken at the Douglas County Jail, either at the sallyport or booking area.

Ms. Cadigan advised that she recalled the name [REDACTED] because he had frequently been in and out of the criminal justice system. Ms. Cadigan indicated that it was concerning to her that a photograph would be shared in the way that it had.

Gennaco advised Ms. Cadigan, (who currently resides in the Midwest) that he would reach out to her again to conduct a more detailed interview of her observations. Since that time, numerous efforts to accomplish this interview have been unavailing. Ms. Cadigan has cancelled an appointment at the last minute, and at other times has represented that she has been too busy to participate further.

Subsequent to the information initially provided by Ms. Cadigan, City officials assisted in providing criminal history for Mr. [REDACTED] a booking photo in which he appears to have

facial injuries, related police reports, and a video of a use of force involving Mr. ██████ in the Douglas County Jail.

Investigator Gennaco tried numerous times to reach former dispatcher Ashley Engleman via text, but was unsuccessful in reaching her.

On October 7, 2025, Griffith Coffman was re-interviewed remotely via Teams. The recording was audio-recorded and provides a verbatim account of the interview.<sup>13</sup> To summarize, Coffman was interviewed about the arrest of ██████ ██████ and an altercation connected with that arrest.

Coffman recalled the incident and stated he was a patrol officer at the time. He received a call about an intoxicated male. ██████ was on probation, had been drinking, and was out past his curfew. Coffman and his partner handcuffed him, put him in a patrol car and brought him to jail.

At the sallyport in the jail, ██████ began to resist and was “physically and verbally defiant”. While being subdued ██████ face was struck, there was blood, and medical staff called. Coffman prepared an incident report. ██████ was taken to the hospital.

Coffman was shown a booking photo of ██████ and confirmed that the injury on ██████ face is consistent with the injury received.

Coffman is asked if it is possible that the photograph of ██████ could be the photograph shared by then Officer LeRette through Snapchat.

Coffman stated that this is possible but he cannot be sure. He remembered a photo of an arrestee being shared but does not remember the photo showing an injury.

Coffman described the use of force against ██████ as a “decentralization” to regain control.

Coffman also said that booking photos are publicly accessible.

As part of our investigative inquiry, we requested a copy of a complaint made by the Superior Professional Police Association Local 27, which represents SPD line officers. The complaint, dated April 10, 2017, made a series of allegations against then Sergeant Paul Winterscheidt. Prior to the complaint being filed, then-Captain John Kiel had been

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<sup>13</sup> A written summary of the interview is included as Exhibit 5A.

conducting an inquiry into the allegations. As part of that inquiry, Kiel prepared a written summary of a conversation he had with then Sgt. Jack Curphy.

That summary included a reference that Officer LeRette and Officer Johnson had “posted videos of arrests they have made onto social media.” Captain Kiel wrote that the allegation caught him off guard and he was not prepared to ask follow-up questions about what Sergeant Curphy had told him. A copy of that interview summary is attached to this report as Exhibit 6.

We interviewed former SPD employee Kiel on July 9, 2025 in person in Superior, Wisconsin. Kiel recalled the Association complaint but did not recall then Sergeant Curphy’s allegation that LeRette had inappropriately posted videos of arrests onto social media.

We attempted to locate and interview retired Sergeant Curphy by telephoning him at his last known telephone number and sending a letter at his last known address which was “returned to sender”. Despite several efforts, we were unable to gain an interview with Curphy.

Investigator LeRette announced her resignation from the Superior Police Department on September 29, before we had completed this aspect of the investigative assignment. However, through her attorney, we attempted to gain an interview with Ms. LeRette. We were advised through her attorney that Ms. LeRette declined our request to interview her about the allegations.

## Analysis and Recommendation

Reaching a clear disposition to this allegation is problematic because of the passage of time since the allegation occurred, the unwillingness of potential witnesses to cooperate in the investigation, and the decision by former employee LeRette to decline to sit for an interview. From witness statements that have been successfully obtained, there is some indicia that then Officer LeRette may have inappropriately shared a photograph of an arrestee on at least one occasion. However, the witnesses that do recall such an act were not able to identify the relevant incident consistently or conclusively, nor was there any independent corroboration of the specific inappropriate photo as described within the anonymous complaint letter.

It may well be the case that there was one or perhaps even several instances of inappropriate sharing of information on social media, as Curphy alleged to then-Captain Kiel. However, because of SPD’s failure to timely follow up on that allegation, faded memories of witnesses, hesitancy among some to fully cooperate, the unwillingness of

others to cooperate at all, and inconsistencies of details about any particular occasion, it is recommended that this allegation be UNRESOLVED.

### III. Allegation of Illegal Tracker Placed on Investigator LeRette's City-Owned Vehicle

Investigator LeRette alleged that former Captain Tom Champaigne illegally placed a tracking device on her city-owned vehicle. Chief Winterscheidt also made similar allegations and drafted a letter to local and federal authorities requesting them to investigate the allegations as a violation of law.<sup>14</sup> The allegations stem from former Captain Champaigne's admission that in an effort to learn whether Investigator LeRette was working a full 40-hour week, he placed a tracking device on her city-owned vehicle. The dispute relates to whether that action was a violation of law or policy.

Our review of the Wisconsin statute potentially implicated suggests that Captain Champaigne was not in violation of law when he attempted to use a tracking device to learn of Investigator LeRette's whereabouts.<sup>15</sup> Wisconsin Statute 940.315 states in pertinent part:

- (1) Whoever does any of the following is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.  
[...]  
(b) Intentionally obtains information regarding another person's movement or location generated by a global positioning device or a device equipped with global positioning technology that has been placed without that person's consent.
  
- (2) This section does not apply to [...] a law enforcement officer acting in his or her official capacity [...]

A plain reading of the statute indicates that this statute did not apply to then-Captain Champaigne's placing of a GPS tracker on Investigator LeRette's city-owned vehicle. At the time, Captain Champaigne was conducting an investigation into concerns he had that Investigator LeRette was not working a full 40-hour work week. The placing of the

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<sup>14</sup> We have been advised that after conversations with Mayor Paine, the referral letter drafted by the Chief was not sent. We discuss the propriety of the Chief sending such a referral letter in the "Nepotism" section of this Report.

<sup>15</sup>The tracking device proved ineffectual in establishing whether Investigator LeRette was working her allotted 40-hour work week, for some of the same reasons the other sources of data (key fob readings, computer logins) were not dispositive. However, the wisdom of using this investigative tool is a different question than the illegality of using such equipment.

tracker was an effort to prove or dispel his concerns. It is uncontroverted that then Assistant Chief Kiel was aware of Captain Champaigne's placing of the device. Based on the evidence, it was apparent that then Captain Champaigne's actions were undertaken by "a law enforcement officer acting in his official capacity." The allegation of illegality is therefore misplaced.<sup>16</sup>

We also were advised that, while SPD has installed GPS tracking devices on its marked patrol cars, it does not have such devices on its unmarked cars. This distinction does not seem warranted: the importance of being able to readily locate marked police vehicles that may need assistance (or for other investigative reasons) applies equally to unmarked SPD vehicles. SPD should install GPS positioning devices on its unmarked cars.

**RECOMMENDATION:** SPD should install GPS positioning devices on its unmarked police vehicles.

## IV. The Sub-Optimal Handling of Nepotism Concerns

As detailed elsewhere, when Investigator LeRette learned that then-Captain Champaigne had placed a tracking device on her city-owned vehicle, she alleged violations of criminal law, SPD policy, and the MOU between the city and the officers' association. And when Chief Winterscheidt learned of the conduct, he drafted a referral letter requesting outside law enforcement agencies to look into the matter. Again, because the "victim" of the allegation was his spouse, it would have been preferable for the Chief not to be either the signatory or the drafter of the correspondence. Any concerns that the Chief had could have been communicated to others in the city for consideration. The Chief's prominent role in advocating for such a referral is problematic considering his spousal relationship with the alleged "victim".<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, in March of 2025, after LeRette had registered her concerns that eventually became the basis of this investigation, Chief Winterscheidt issued a letter of comment to Captain Harriman and also attempted to extend his probationary period as captain.<sup>18</sup> A major part of the concerns raised in the letter involved the Chief criticizing Harriman for

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<sup>16</sup> Investigator LeRette also alleged that the placing of the tracking device violated labor agreements and other policies of the SPD. However, even if the action may have violated policy or other administrative proscriptions, since former Captain Champaigne is no longer employed by SPD, no administrative consequences are available for him.

<sup>17</sup> It is our understanding that the referral was eventually never transmitted.

<sup>18</sup> The extension of probation was rescinded due to the fact that the letter was not served until *after* Captain Harriman had successfully completed his probationary period.

talking to the LeRette's supervisor in Duluth and suggesting that LeRette's status in the regional task force be terminated. Again, the relationship that the Chief had with LeRette should have caused him to refrain from formally criticizing a subordinate about alleged negative actions taken against his spouse, especially with LeRette's similar allegations then under review by the city.

As detailed above, Superior retained an outside investigator to conduct an investigation into the allegations that Investigator LeRette had been engaged in time fraud. Upon the conclusion of that investigation, Mayor Paine wrote a letter expressing disappointment about the performance of LeRette that also raised credibility concerns. See Exhibit 7.

However, on April 15, 2025, Chief Winterscheidt authored a memorandum to his spouse indicating that while he had no involvement in the investigation into the allegations against her, Mayor Paine had indicated that the allegations had been not sustained. The Chief informed LeRette that accordingly, the investigative file would be closed with that determination. See Exhibit 8.

Certainly, the Mayor's letter could not accurately be interpreted as a "not sustained" finding. And we were not aware that there had been any change in the Mayor's position at the time of the Chief's letter being drafted.

This meant that there were both procedural *and* substantive concerns raised by the Chief's actions. First, his decision to draft the letter at all undercut the city's efforts to keep the investigation and resolution of the allegations against his wife independent of his influence. Second, he re-framed the findings in a manner that was favorable to LeRette while deviating from the actual nature of the Mayor's initial assessment of the evidence – thereby validating concerns about his ability to remain objective. Should the Chief have wanted a method to close the file (as he professed during his investigative interview, and which arguably had validity), he should have asked the Mayor to draft a closeout letter instead of inserting himself into the investigation's resolution.

Additionally, in early 2025, in large part to the concerns raised by the relationship between Chief Winterscheidt and Investigator LeRette, the City moved to strengthen the nepotism policy. After reviewing the new draft policy, Chief Winterscheidt recognized that the policy directly impacted him, but still voiced his objection to the changes in the policy. Precisely because the policy directly impacted him (and his spouse), Chief Winterscheidt should have refrained from commenting on the policy.

The circumstances here were, to some extent, extraordinary. But they highlight the importance of clarifying expectations and establishing policies that would create better guidelines for future reference in comparable situations. The City appears to have taken relevant steps—a development we endorse.

## Problems With Current SPD Structure and Accountability

In addition to the above-identified concerns, the relationship between the Chief and former Investigator LeRette created additional problems with regard to the allegations against her and the allegations she made against others. Clearly, the Chief's spousal relationship would inherently require his recusal from active involvement in the investigation or disposition of either of those matters. But this leaves open the question of what the alternative protocol should be.

For purposes of investigating a matter, the City can, as it did in this instance, delegate the investigation to an outside party. But the question of who the ultimate decision-maker should be upon the conclusion of that investigation is a separate one – and here became a matter of contention in light of the conflict of interest that necessitated the independent investigation in the first place.

In our view, either the Mayor or Assistant Chief should have that responsibility at first blush, with perhaps an appeal of any initial decision lying with the Police and Fire Commission. In sum, the City should work to develop protocols that address this eventuality in advance should this situation repeat.<sup>19</sup>

**RECOMMENDATION:** Superior should develop protocols regarding who is the designated decision-maker for SPD administrative investigations when the Chief is unable to participate due to a conflict.

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<sup>19</sup> We have been advised that Chief Winterscheidt suggested that in such situations, the Chief should be able to designate an “interim chief” to review the investigation and make a disposition and disciplinary determination. We find this suggestion not feasible due to the Chief's role in deciding who should make the decision.

Due to recent events, I think the following information should be disclosed regarding the past conduct of Officer Mikayla Lurette. Approximately 6-8 years ago while Officer Lurette was working as a patrol officer on the night shift, she was present during a booking at the Douglas County Jail, when a man described as being mentally challenged was brought into the jail for booking. This male was observed with his pants and underwear hanging down, exposing his buttocks. Douglas County Jail Sergeant Russ Milroy observed Officer Lurette using her cell phone to take a nude photograph of this man's buttocks.

Subsequently, Officer Lurette posted this photograph to people in her chat group, including fellow officers and the Communication Center staff on duty that night. Her immediate supervisors that night were Sergeant Jon McKinnon and Sergeant Paul Winterscheidt. These nude photos were sent via an app that allows a person to view the picture, then it erases in a few seconds once it is viewed. One Communication Center employee, Amy Pullen, observed this photo sent by Officer Lurette and found it offensive and inappropriate. Amy Pullen quickly took a screenshot of this photo before it could erase. Officer Lurette could see that Amy Pullen took this screenshot of the photo Officer Lurette sent. Officer Lurette then went to the Communication Center to ask that Amy Pullen erase this picture that Officer Lurette sent. Amy Pullen told Officer Lurette that she erased this picture when in fact, she did not erase it. Meanwhile, Douglas County Sergeant Russ Milroy informed the Superior Police Department Sergeants on duty that night of Officer Lurette's conduct in the Douglas County Booking room. Since Sergeant Winterscheidt was currently dating Officer Lurette, Sergeant McKinnon interviewed Officer Lurette about the report that she took a nude photograph of a prisoner's buttocks and shared it with others without knowledge or consent of the prisoner.

Officer Lurette told Sergeant McKinnon that she did take a nude photo of this prisoner and shared it with others without the prisoner's knowledge or consent.

This action is in direct violation of WI criminal statutes 942.09 (4): criminal distribution of sexually explicit images, which is posting, publishing or causing to be posted or published a private representation if the actor knows that the person depicted does not consent to the posting or publication of the private representation. A violation of this statute is a class H felony, fine up to \$10,000, imprisonment up to 6 years, or both.

Inv. LaRette,

Thank you for meeting with me to discuss the accusations that you had mismanaged or falsely reported your time. As you know, I read through the report of the independent investigator that we hired to learn the facts regarding this situation. I have also read your letter on the subject. Through this report, discussions with the investigator and your supervisors, and a discussion with you and your representatives, I believe that the preponderance of the evidence shows that you have violated the following policies:

#### Superior Police Department Policy 320: Standards of Conduct

##### 320.5.1 LAWS, RULES AND ORDERS

- a) Violation of, or ordering or instructing a subordinate to violate any policy, procedure, rule, order, directive, requirement or failure to follow instructions contained in department or City manuals.
- b) Disobedience of any legal directive or order issued by any department member of a higher rank.
- c) Violation of federal, state, or local or administrative laws, rules or regulations.

##### 320.5.5 ATTENDANCE

- a) Leaving the job to which the member is assigned during duty hours without reasonable excuse and proper permission and approval.
- b) Unexcused or unauthorized absence or tardiness.
- c) Excessive absenteeism or abuse of leave privileges.
- d) Failure to report to work or to the place of assignment at the time specified and fully prepared to perform duties without reasonable excuse.

During your time working on the task force in Duluth, your day-to-day work was largely unsupervised. Several technologies provide evidence of your day-to-day activities, including your secure door entries and exits, your computer log on, and certain digital investigative tools. While I concede that these tools provide evidence of when you are working and do not necessarily prove that you are not working outside the times indicated, you have been unable to account for your time, by testimony or other evidence, outside of the times indicated by these technological devices. The times themselves also imply an absence or tardiness from work. I was especially concerned by several door entries that occurred a few minutes or a few hours after your reported work time. Because you have not been able to account for what you were doing during these times between your reported start and your entry into the building, and especially since many of these gaps were too short to permit any meaningful work, I am forced to conclude that you demonstrated a lax attitude towards your work schedule which resulted in unexcused absences and tardiness and possibly falsification of your time sheet and theft of time.

You were instructed by both your Superior and Duluth supervisors to report changes in your schedule to your supervisor in Superior. While you claimed that this policy was unnecessarily strict and only imposed recently, these were nonetheless lawful orders, and you did not formally contest them with your chain of command or through the grievance procedure.

These policy violations are serious and merit discipline. I cannot find evidence that you have received any formal discipline on this or any other subject in the past and your Duluth supervisor reports that your work has been acceptable, if not better, during this period. Previous violations of these policies by other officers have resulted in unpaid suspension for a first offense. When I have intervened with my direct subordinates on similar issues, I have generally begun with a verbal warning.

Based on all these factors, I have decided to issue you this written warning, which I will maintain in your supervisory file. This is significantly more lenient than these violations deserve, and I am only willing to limit discipline in this matter because you have convinced me that you take this matter seriously and are unlikely to violate our policies again. Your positive work history and reputation as a skilled and committed police officer also merits leniency for this first offense. I am unwilling to compromise your career or your previous dedication through strict discipline unless absolutely necessary. If, however, you commit other violations in the future, I will insist on skipping steps on the disciplinary ladder and implementing much more severe sanctions.



## Superior Police Department

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**To: Investigator Mikayla LeRette**

**From: Chief Paul Winterscheidt**

**Date: April 15, 2025**

**Re: Internal Investigation Resolution (II 24-06)**

The internal investigation into this matter has been concluded. Given our marital relationship, I did not participate in this internal investigation, and decision-making authority for the outcome of this investigation was deferred to Mayor Paine. Upon completion of this investigation, Mayor Paine indicated that the allegations outlined in the complaint were not sustained through evidence or testimony. Pursuant to Superior Police Policy 1013 – PERSONNEL RECORDS, the investigation file and associated documents will be entered into the Internal Affairs File with a resolution of 'Not Sustained.' Consistent with the requirements of Police Policy 1013.6, internal investigations that are not sustained shall not be entered into your Department File but shall be maintained in the Internal Affairs File.

**Respectfully,**

**Paul Winterscheidt  
Chief of Police**

# Independent Investigation into Allegations of Misconduct Involving Superior Police Department Member Jeff Harriman

January 2026

Independent Investigators  
Michael Gennaco  
Stephen Connolly



OIR  

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GROUP

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## Overview:

This investigation was initiated in response to allegations that were raised at various times in 2025 by (now former) Superior Police Department ("SPD" or "the Department") Investigator Mikayla LeRette.<sup>1</sup> While some of the claims implicated personnel who are no longer with the agency, others involved current employees and, if true, could lead to administrative discipline for violations of Department policy. Accordingly, the investigation was conducted in keeping with the relevant employees' formal rights and obligations under state law and SPD policy.

The subject employee in this report is Sergeant Jeff Harriman. The allegations arise from periods of time when he was at a previous rank level.<sup>2</sup>

Events relevant to the misconduct allegations occurred over an extended period. The following timeline is meant to provide a framework for the analysis of individual issues, and is intended as a factual, objective depiction of matters that participants may have perceived or interpreted in contrasting ways.

November of 2022: Investigator LeRette returns from [REDACTED] leave and begins a light duty assignment that lasts until December. She also attempts to find a suitable lactation space during this time.

September of 2023: Investigators LeRette and Ron Custer meet with then-Lt. Pope to discuss productivity concerns in relation to their work in narcotics investigations.

December of 2023: Investigator LeRette is re-assigned to the Lake Superior Violent Offender Task Force per the decision of incoming Chief Paul Winterscheidt.

January of 2024: Paul Winterscheidt officially takes over as Chief of SPD, and Investigator LeRette begins her work with the Task Force, reporting to offices in Duluth, MN.

February-March 2024: Captain Tom Champaigne begins to track the working schedule of Investigator LeRette and identifies what he considers to be discrepancies between reported and actual time on-duty. His investigative efforts include the placing of a GPS tracker on Investigator LeRette's work vehicle.

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<sup>1</sup> Investigator LeRette voluntarily resigned from the Department in September of 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Sergeant Harriman chose to voluntarily demote in December of 2025.

March 2024: Prior to his retirement, Captain Champaigne discusses his concerns about Investigator LeRette's attendance with his replacement, Jeff Harriman.

June 2024: Investigator LeRette goes on [REDACTED] leave for her second child. Captain Harriman gives additional attention to Investigator LeRette's attendance records, and develops his own questions about seeming discrepancies or inconsistencies.

July 2024: Captain Harriman comes to believe a formal investigation is needed into possible misconduct. Because of Chief Winterscheidt's spousal relationship with Investigator LeRette, Captain Harriman brings his concerns to the attention of Assistant Chief John Kiel instead, as well as the City Attorney (Frog Prell) and Human Resources Director (Cammi Janigo).

July 2024: The City hires an outside investigator (Daniel Hardman) to conduct an administrative investigation into the potential violation of several Department policies by Investigator LeRette.

September 2024: Investigator LeRette returns from [REDACTED] leave and is placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation. She and the labor association file a grievance, challenging different procedural aspects of the City's actions. On September 26, she is interviewed by Daniel Hardman.

October 2024-January 2025: The completed investigation is pending a resolution. Potential settlements are discussed, but do not come to fruition.

January 2025: After a meeting with Investigator LeRette, Mayor Paine (acting as the decision-maker in the case) issues a two-page "written warning" as a consequence for two identified policy violations: 320.5.1 ("Laws, Rules and Orders") and 320.5.5 ("Attendance.")

February 2025: Investigator LeRette writes and submits a lengthy "Rebuttal" to the findings of the internal investigation against her; in addition to challenging the validity of Daniel Hardman's case memo and its conclusions, she makes several allegations of mistreatment and wrongful conduct directed against her by current (as well as past) SPD members.

February 2025: Investigator LeRette files a Temporary Restraining Order in response to Captain Harriman's attempts to secure a copy of the Hardman case memo through a Public Records request.

March 2025: Investigator LeRette files a federal civil rights lawsuit against the City and former Captain Champaigne, based on the City's alleged failure to meet its obligations

in providing a suitable lactation space, and for the allegedly unlawful placing of a tracking device on her work vehicle.

March 2025: Investigator LeRette sends an email to the Mayor and City Attorney, alleging multiple instances of "harassment and retaliatory" behavior, several of which are focused on Captain Harriman.

As mentioned above, former Investigator LeRette's range of allegations included claims that related to two current SPD members and had the potential to constitute administratively sanctionable violations of Department policy. This investigation was framed accordingly. Relevant sources of information included Investigator LeRette's above-referenced written submissions, as well as a formal investigative interview of her as a witness/complainant, and documentation and suggestions about possible witnesses that she subsequently provided to investigators.

## **Subject Employee Sergeant Jeff Harriman:**

Sergeant Jeff Harriman voluntarily returned to his current rank in late 2025. He was previously a captain during the time period that gave rise to Investigator LeRette's specific allegations against him. Many of these arose from the administrative investigation into alleged misconduct by Investigator LeRette, and its extended aftermath.

In March of 2025, Investigator LeRette sent an email to Superior's Mayor and City Attorney, setting out several specific allegations of wrongful conduct by then-Captain Harriman.<sup>3</sup> These included the following:

- Refusing to sign off on overtime and time off requests.
- Inappropriately asking a task force supervisor to remove Investigator LeRette from the task force
- Inappropriately discussing the details of Investigator LeRette's administrative investigation with subordinate members of the Superior Police Department
- Misleadingly alleging that Investigator LeRette filed a TRO against her husband.

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<sup>3</sup> A copy of that email is attached as Exhibit 1.

Several SPD policies (and state requirements) were implicated by one or more of these allegations. They included the following:

Superior Police Department Policy 320(d): Standards of Conduct

Superior Police Department Policy 320.5.2(b) and (g): Ethics

Superior Police Department Policy 320.5.2: Discrimination, Oppression, or Favoritism

Superior Police Department Policy 320.5.8(d) and (e): Performance

Superior Police Department Policy 320.5.9(a) and (f): Conduct

Superior Police Policy 1004: Anti-Retaliation

Superior Police Policy 1004.3: Retaliation Prohibited

Superior Police Policy 02.02: Anti-Harassment/Sexual Harassment

Wisconsin Fair Employment Act

Investigator LeRette was also interviewed as the complainant in this investigation. That interview occurred on July 7, 2025.<sup>4</sup>

Then-Captain Harriman was interviewed as a subject in this investigation on July 10, 2025.<sup>5</sup>

What follows is a discussion of the aforementioned allegations, along with relevant evidence, and a finding as to the outcome of each.

### ***Deliberate Ignoring of Overtime/Time off Requests***

In her "Rebuttal" letter to the Mayor after findings were issued in the administrative case against her, Investigator LeRette alleged that both Captain Harriman and then-Lt. Pope refused to approve her overtime and time-off requests. (Her specific focus was on the time after she had returned from administrative leave in late 2024). She claimed the problem became noticeable to the point where lower-ranking supervisors asked permission to take over the responsibility and ensure that the requests were appropriately addressed. She reiterated this allegation in an email to the Mayor and the

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<sup>4</sup> A written summary of that interview's contents is attached as Exhibit 2.

<sup>5</sup> A written summary of that interview's contents is attached as Exhibit 3.

City Attorney, and said that she had brought the issue up to the City's HR Director in January of 2025 (which she said resulted in no apparent follow-up).

Importantly, Investigator LeRette did not point to specific occasions or dates in which this alleged failure to timely approve overtime occurred, but alleged the conduct as a general practice. However, allegations with specific dates and an accounting of the actual delays incurred would have been more potentially actionable and would also provide a better opportunity for those accused to respond.

HR Director Cammi Janigo was asked about this in a discussion with us on July 10, 2025; she said she recalled the issue being raised, but was focused on whether there had been any adverse consequences.<sup>6</sup> She said that, per Investigator LeRette herself, she had indeed been paid in keeping with the overtime claims she had submitted.

We also interviewed Sergeant Adam Poskozim about this issue; he had been identified by Investigator LeRette as a knowledgeable witness to her concerns.<sup>7</sup> He was also an experienced supervisor who was well-versed in the mechanics of the Department's overtime system.

When asked about the importance of timeliness in the approval of overtime submissions, Sgt. Poskozim said that it should ideally happen within the same calendar week of the request to avoid confusion, but that a later approval would not preclude compensation for the overtime worked. As for time-off requests, those were expected to be submitted 24 hours before planned time off. While approvals were not a prerequisite to the person taking the time (if having submitted the request), the process was important in the patrol setting in order to ensure minimum staffing.

Sgt. Poskozim was asked specifically about his direct experience with Investigator LeRette regarding overtime submissions. He said that he does have authority to approve people's paperwork even if they are not in his chain, and is sometimes asked by officers to perform this function. He was asked whether he had performed this function for Investigator LeRette.

While he professed to be quite sure he had done this for Investigator LeRette (as well as Investigator Tim Monte, who also worked in the Duluth Task Force), he did not have a specific recollection of particular times or a sense of being personally aware of her

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<sup>6</sup> This conversation was not conducted as a formal interview and was not separately summarized.

<sup>7</sup> This interview was conducted remotely on August 14, 2025. A written summary of its contents is attached as Exhibit 4.

being treated differently (or mistreated).<sup>8</sup> He also said that he had much less direct contact with her than he once did, primarily because her assignment brought her to the station in Superior very rarely.

Asked about this issue in his investigative interview, then-Captain Harriman denied the allegation that she was maliciously or otherwise unresponsive to Investigator LeRette's requests. He told us he became aware of this claim in a meeting with the Mayor in February. He claimed to have looked into the issue, and asserted that the maximum delay in any approval of related requests by LeRette was two days – a duration he said was commensurate with the turnaround for other personnel. He also explained that any failure to respond promptly was likely to be a function of his breadth of responsibility, citing the different jobs he was performing within the agency.

Then-Captain Pope also said in her interview that, as a practical matter, the pre-approval of time off was a non-issue. Personnel were entitled to it, and the implications of investigators being off were significantly different from the patrol context (where staffing requirements would be more likely to result in denials). This idea also applied to the significance of any delay for which then-Captain Harriman may have been responsible.

**Analysis:** The available evidence does not show that the alleged neglect of Investigator LeRette's requests for approvals of overtime and time off resulted in concrete adverse consequences. (Nor is it as serious in its implications as an unjustified *rejection* of those requests would be.) While this lack of practical impact is significant, it is also somewhat peripheral to Investigator LeRette's contention regarding her sense of harm. In her email from March of 2025, she described then-Captain Harriman as "totally consumed and obsessed with me." She perceived the alleged ignoring of her requests as part of a larger pattern of willful mistreatment.

Deliberate non-engagement with reasonable work requests from a subordinate could potentially rise to the level of actionable misconduct. However, there is not conclusive evidence that this non-responsiveness occurred at all, or was malicious in its intent (if in fact gaps in timely approval did happen).

In his interview, Captain Harriman denied both the substance of the neglect and the existence of any intent to harm LeRette by failing to be appropriately responsive to these routine scheduling requests. Nor did Sergeant Poskozim (who was specifically

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<sup>8</sup> He did acknowledge having spoken with Investigator LeRette about her perceptions, and was generally aware of her sense that she was being singled out and treated in a discriminatory fashion.

cited by Investigator LeRette as a percipient witness) corroborate the contention that this was an obvious problem that required his intervention.

In the absence of a concrete showing of harm, or definitive proof to the contrary, the balance of the evidence suggests that this allegation should be "Unfounded."

### ***Wrongful Interference with Task Force Assignment***

Investigator LeRette began work on the Lake Superior Violent Offender Task Force in January of 2024. She reported to work in Duluth, Minnesota, and her on-scene supervisor was Sergeant Ron Wilson.

In her March 2025 email to the Mayor, Investigator LeRette mentioned several instances in which then-Captain Harriman allegedly spoke to Sergeant Wilson in ways that wrongfully intended to undermine her position in the Task Force, or were otherwise problematic and reflective of an unprofessional animosity toward her.

The first of these episodes in time was allegedly in September of 2024, when then-Captain Harriman was reported as having contacted Sergeant Wilson regarding Investigator LeRette's misconduct investigation (for which Sergeant Wilson had provided a witness interview). Harriman allegedly wanted to know if Sergeant Wilson had leaked the name of the outside investigator to Investigator LeRette. (This was a preoccupation that seemed strange to Investigator LeRette. It also fed into her later (eventually disproven) belief that the original selection of Daniel Hardman to investigate her case was based on biased personal relationships that worked to her disadvantage.)

The next cited issue came from November of 2024, when then-Captain Harriman again allegedly contacted Sergeant Wilson regarding Investigator LeRette's status as a Task Force member. He was purported to have recommended to Sergeant Wilson that he terminate LeRette's tenure and remove her desk from the relevant office. This allegedly came in the aftermath of LeRette's selection to be Task Force officer with the Drug Enforcement Administration – an outgrowth of her role in the Lake Superior Task Force.

An additional alleged comment cited by Investigator LeRette (though framed without reference to a particular point in time in her correspondence to the Mayor) was purportedly made in reference to scheduling issues and Superior P.D.'s expectations. Asked about LeRette's schedule by Sergeant Wilson, then-Captain Harriman allegedly said, "Why don't you just ask Investigator LeRette's husband," a comment LeRette characterized as "unprofessional" and "embarrassing."

Similarly, Harriman allegedly told Investigator LeRette directly in November of 2025 that he was not dealing with her schedule, and said her "husband can take care of that."

*Inquiry about "Leak" of Investigator's Name:*

Sergeant Wilson was interviewed as a witness in this case on two occasions. The first was an in-person interview conducted on July 9, 2025. The second was conducted remotely, on September 11, 2025.<sup>9</sup>

Sergeant Wilson was asked about the different allegations for which he was cited as a percipient witness. He corroborated that there had been an inquiry made by then-Captain Harriman about whether the identity of the outside investigator in the LeRette misconduct case had been leaked. He told Harriman at that time that he had not done so, and reiterated this point in his interview. Sergeant Wilson found the question to be strange on its face, and resented the implication that he or his own supervisor (Lieutenant Tanski) had done something improper.

We asked then-Captain Harriman about this issue. He acknowledged having asked this question of Sergeant Wilson. He said he had been asked to do so by outside Investigator Hardman, in his capacity as the Superior Police Department's liaison to Hardman's investigation.

*Analysis:* This allegation is not disputed. The question, then, is whether it was improper in a way that rose to the level of actionable misconduct. It was not. Based on her correspondence with the Mayor, Investigator LeRette appears to have considered this preoccupation with the "leak" issue to be reflective of larger concerns about potential bias in the choice of Mr. Hardman as an investigator. As a stand-alone matter, though, the pursuit of information about a possible leak was odd but not inherently wrongful – even if it had come from then-Captain Harriman himself (which he claimed it had not). Accordingly, this is not a basis to impose a finding that policy was violated.

*Attempts to Interfere with Assignment to Task Force:*

Investigator LeRette maintained that then-Captain Harriman had used her selection to a federal task force as a basis for improperly trying to convince Sergeant Wilson that she should no longer be part of the Task Force in Duluth that he supervised (and to which LeRette was still assigned.)

Sergeant Wilson was asked about this in his witness interview. He recalled having a conversation along those lines with then-Captain Harriman. His recollection was that Harriman expressed concern that Investigator LeRette would be "spread too thin," and that the federal office's distance from Duluth would contribute to difficulties in performing

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<sup>9</sup> Written summaries of the contents of those interviews are attached as Exhibits 5 and 6.

the different job functions effectively. He did not have the sense that Harriman's issues were personal to LeRette or disparaging of her; nor did he believe Harriman was trying to get him to take specific action against her.<sup>10</sup> Instead, he was expressing a logistical concern that seemed reasonable. For his part, he said he was grateful for whatever time LeRette could dedicate, given the staffing limitations the Task Force was experiencing.

Then-Captain Harriman did not have a specific recollection of a related conversation. However, he acknowledged having concerns about the dual role that Investigator LeRette had assumed. He discussed the implications of it with Sergeant Wilson, and thinks he would have said something along the lines of the importance of figuring out what his Task Force needed. He strongly denied having made any disparaging comments or attempting to coerce Sergeant Wilson into removing LeRette. He said it was not his place or consistent with his character to have done so.

Chief Winterscheidt was interviewed as a witness to this investigation over the course of two separate sessions, on July 8 and July 11, 2025.<sup>11</sup> This specific allegation was discussed in the second session. Chief Winterscheidt said he had cited the conversation with Sergeant Wilson as "subversive conduct" that formed part of the basis for his decision (later retracted) to extend then-Captain' Harriman's probationary period at this rank level in March of 2025.

The issue was documented in a "Letter of Counsel" to Harriman, prepared by the Chief and dated March 7.<sup>12</sup> In his interview for this investigation, Harriman claimed that he had not been asked about this matter prior to receiving the Letter of Counsel, or afforded an opportunity by the Chief to provide his side of the story.<sup>13</sup>

Analysis: The two participants in the conversation at issue here have similar recollections of it. Importantly, then-Captain Harriman strongly denies having made an effort to disrupt Investigator LeRette's assignment to the Task Force in Duluth, or disparaging her personally. This is corroborated by Sergeant Wilson. And the

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<sup>10</sup> For example, he did not recall the specific comment allegedly made by Harriman in this context, that LeRette was now "too good" for the Duluth assignment.

<sup>11</sup> Written summaries of those interviews are attached as Exhibits 7 and 8.

<sup>12</sup> Asked whether he considered the matter to have been addressed by his Letter of Counsel (and therefore not an apt subject for additional intervention in the discipline context), Chief Winterscheidt said he did.

<sup>13</sup> We discuss our concerns about Chief Winterscheidt's issuance of the "letter of counsel" under separate cover.

underlying topic – namely, the practical implications of the new demands on LeRette's time and availability – seems to have been fallen reasonably within the ambit of Harriman's managerial responsibilities.

**Refusal to Engage with Scheduling Issues:**

Investigator LeRette cited two specific instances in which then-Captain Harriman pointedly deflected questions about LeRette's work schedule after her return from administrative leave, and instead separately told Sergeant Wilson and then LeRette that they should ask the Chief. Apart from the issue of whether then-Captain Harriman should have taken responsibility,<sup>14</sup> Investigator LeRette seems to have perceived Harriman's responses as an unprofessional reference to her personal relationship with Chief Winterscheidt.

Sergeant Wilson was asked about this issue. He had some recollection of becoming aware of a related comment, but was unclear about the particulars – or whether it had even arisen in a conversation he was personally involved with.

For his part, then-Captain Harriman directly acknowledged the substance of these conversations in his interview for this investigation. He explained matter-of-factly that his responses were driven by his own uncertainty and lack of agency within the organization in the aftermath of Investigator LeRette's return to work.<sup>15</sup>

**Analysis:** This specific issue seems to have been an outgrowth of a larger atmosphere of tension and dysfunction. Harriman's decision to steer clear of direct involvement with Investigator LeRette's work schedule was a reflection not only of frustration but also a seemingly genuine lack of clarity over the extent to which he could supervise her work. Whether it lapsed into a lack of professionalism is likely a matter of nuanced tone and individual perception; it seems notable that Sergeant Wilson did not have a strong recollection of related commentary. At any rate, the conduct (while reflective of an unfortunate dynamic) does not rise to the level of a formal policy violation.

In light of the preceding assessment of the individual "component parts" giving rise to this allegation against then-Captain Harriman, the collective outcome is "Unfounded."

***Inappropriate Workplace Discussions of Personnel Investigation***

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<sup>14</sup> During her interview for this investigation, Investigator LeRette reiterated her frustration over then-Captain Harriman's general refusal to perform supervisory duties in relation to her.

<sup>15</sup> He cited a formal grievance that he said had been filed by Investigator LeRette against him, which was partially based on allegedly unauthorized efforts by him to alter her schedule.

In her written submissions to the Mayor, Investigator LeRette included accusations that then-Captain Harriman was improperly discussing details of her administrative investigation with other Department personnel. Those matters are confidential.

In her interview for this investigation, Investigator LeRette asserted that she had been treated coldly by a large percentage of the agency (including former friends) upon her return, and attributed this in part to misrepresentations about the conduct that had been the subject of her administrative case. She blamed then-Captain Harriman and (now-retired) Assistant Chief John Kiel for this dynamic.

In her March email to the Mayor, she also said different people had informed her that then-Captain Harriman was discussing the case, to the point where she had gone to HR to express concerns. She said Assistant Chief Kiel had been prompted by this to send out an email in November of 2024,

In his interview for this this investigation, Officer Lucas Ciciora (whom Investigator LeRette cited as a potentially relevant witness on this point) professed to being aware that union members were familiar with details of the internal investigation that they presumably should not have known.<sup>16</sup> (He mentioned information about the GPS tracker on Investigator LeRette's car as an example. He surmised that then-Captain Harriman was the source of this (based on part on other interactions between Harriman and union members with which he was directly familiar) but acknowledged that no one he had talked to specifically identified Harriman as the source.

Sergeant Adam Posozkim (cited above) was also identified by Investigator LeRette as a potential witness to this issue. During his interview, he was asked about his awareness of inappropriate and/or inaccurate information about the LeRette investigation by then-Captain Harriman.

Sergeant Posozkim said that Captain Harriman "absolutely" had been talking about the case – as have many people within the agency. He also noted that there has been a significant dearth of official information – which is unusual in his experience as a supervisor. This has led to uncertainty and misinformation: for example, he professed to be unaware as to whether Investigator LeRette's case had even been finalized.

Asked specifically about then-Captain Harriman's dissemination of information (accurate or otherwise), he said that Harriman had spoken with him about the case in some detail

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<sup>16</sup> Officer Ciciora was interviewed on August 13, 2025. A written summary of its contents is attached as Exhibit 9.

"yesterday" (which would have been August 13, 2025), but "not prior to."<sup>17</sup> Sergeant Posozkim was asked whether he had overheard speaking inappropriately about the case in open areas, and with line level personnel who would not have had a reason to know about it. Posozkim responded by saying he was aware of conversations Harriman had with Sergeant Eastman, but that these occurred behind closed doors.

Then-Captain Harriman was asked about this during his interview for this case. He said it would be difficult to respond to allegations about information-sharing in the absence of specific dates, times, participants in the conversation, or contents of what was shared. He also took the position that, once he had received the document from his public records request for the investigation file, he was in a position to speak about its contents with anyone at any time.

More generally, he acknowledged the possibility of having spoken about the case with sergeant-level supervisors – a practice he considered consistent with his limited past experience in discussing misconduct cases for managerial purposes. He suggested that any sharing would have been at the general level of mentioning an allegation of misappropriation or mismanagement of time. He stated that he does not think he would have discussed the case with patrol level personnel and could not recall one – but did not rule out the possibility that evidence of such a conversation existed.

Then-Captain Harriman pointed out the widespread shock that had arisen within the agency when personnel learned in September that Investigator LeRette had been placed on administrative leave. He said this indicated to him that the few knowledgeable parties (including himself) had done a good job of keeping matters confidential. Once news of the case began to emerge though, it was likely that interest levels were high and information was shared, though he disavowed being able to recall a specific example of an improper communication that involved himself.

He did not recall receiving a relevant email from Assistant Chief Kiel in 2024, but says he would have followed its directives.

**Analysis:** This allegation suffers to some extent from vagueness; though Investigator LeRette's concerns were apparently sincere, and prompted contemporaneous outreach to have them addressed, examples of specific statements and involved Department members were somewhat lacking. Officer Ciciora believed that then-Captain Harriman had shared confidential information about the case inappropriately, but the interactions with other union members that led to this suspicion were, by his own account, missing a direct reference to Harriman as the source. Similarly, Sergeant Posozkim said that

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<sup>17</sup> This conversation had purportedly included Harriman's opinion about Investigator LeRette's culpability in her case, and seems to have emerged from the context of Harriman's own pending investigation.

Harriman had "absolutely" spoken about the case, but did not make a particular distinction between Harriman and the general level of interest/discussion that the situation has generated throughout the agency. He did not corroborate specific examples of commentary by Harriman that would have been inappropriate because of content, accuracy, or audience.

Then-Captain Harriman found it difficult to respond to the allegation in the absence of specifics. He did offer a generalized denial of inappropriate sharing, said he did not believe he would have communicated sensitive information to patrol-level personnel, and claimed to be unaware of any nexus between his own actions and a November 2024 email about discussing the case. At the same time, he did not rule out the possibility that evidence of such exchanges occurred.

Given the reality that Investigator LeRette's situation would naturally have been a focal point of attention within the agency, the dissemination of information and/or misinformation about the case referenced by Officer Ciciora and Sergeant Posozkim, and which gave rise to Investigator LeRette's understandable concerns, is difficult to attribute to then-Captain Harriman with certainty. At the same time, he was clearly preoccupied by the way that the matter was being handled internally, and his concerns gave rise to frustration that may have influenced his communications. Harriman was less than definitive in denying the possibility of commentary that was questionable in terms of what was shared and with whom. And his assertion that materials received through his private records request were eligible for open discussion is of limited weight, since he would still presumably be restricted in his professional capacity as to what and how and with whom he communicated regarding this Departmental matter.

In light of the inconclusive evidence, this allegation is "Not Sustained."

### ***Deliberately Misleading References to Temporary Restraining Order***

Is it undisputed that then-Captain Harriman filed a private records request for the materials produced in the Hardman investigation into potential misconduct by Investigator LeRette. This was a function of his frustration over being excluded from knowing the results of the case, even though he believed that his role in initiating it and his ongoing managerial responsibilities made it important for him to be aware of the outcome.

Harriman filed the request in his private capacity, and received what he later characterized as a redacted version of the investigative report. In response to concerns about the release of an investigation that Investigator LeRette believed to be deeply flawed and unfairly damaging to her reputation, she filed for a temporary restraining order in February of 2025 in order to block production of the materials.

The nature of that request for a restraining order became a point of further contention: in her March email to the Mayor, Investigator LeRette alleged that Captain Harriman spread rumors that were intended to intentionally leave the impression that LeRette's legal action against the Chief of Police was domestic in nature – arising from his status as her husband as opposed to being the head of the agency that controlled the investigation report. This would constitute mistreatment that rose to the level of violation for one or more policies.

In that March of 2025 email, Investigator LeRette cited civilian employee Megan Jones as a person who overheard then-Captain Harriman engaging in the relevant behavior. Ms. Jones, who worked for the Superior Police Department as a Coordinated Services Specialist from August of 2024 to March of 2025, was interviewed remotely as a witness to this investigation on August 15, 2025.<sup>18</sup>

Ms. Jones was asked about her familiarity with potentially problematic comments made by then-Captain Harriman. She cited emails written by him to the Chief that she considered inappropriate. She said a specific moment she could recall was sitting in her office and hearing then-Captain Harriman say to whomever was in the squad room, "Now she's suing her husband, the Chief." She went on to explain that this was confusing to her, until she saw a news article later that covered LeRette's lawsuit against Superior and individual Department members (which was filed in March of 2025).

She considered this typical of the way Harriman would deliberately mischaracterize things so as to put Investigator LeRette in an unfairly negative light. Asked about other examples of things he might have said or done, Ms. Jones said she rarely spoke to him, and that he was generally not around during her tenure with the agency.<sup>19</sup>

Chief Paul Winterscheidt was asked about this during his second witness interview session. The Chief said he spoke to then-Captain Harriman about the mischaracterization of the TRO request, but on further consideration was not sure when in time his knowledge of it had occurred. He said that Megan Jones had been the source of his awareness, and that Jones had talked about the TRO request with an "insinuation" that it was domestic in nature.

Apart from Megan Jones, this mischaracterization (whatever the source) became known to the Chief (via Michelle Pope) as a rumor that was working its way around the

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<sup>18</sup> A written summary of that interview's contents is attached as Exhibit 10.

<sup>19</sup> Ms. Jones acknowledged having a personal friendship with Investigator LeRette that dated back several years, and also conveyed the negative impressions she had developed about different management figures during her months as an employee with the Police Department.

Department. It prompted the Chief to issue a clarifying email that was sent to the whole Department.

Asked about this in his interview for this investigation, then-Captain Harriman denied engaging in the alleged behavior. He said the request for a TRO was a public record that was brought to his attention by other Department members before he knew about it. He recalled the Chief's aforementioned email on this subject, but said it was not directed at him. He flatly denied insinuating or misleading, and instead says that, if anything, he would have clarified any misunderstanding. His understanding is that the import of the request was self-evident from court records.

**Analysis:** The evidence here is uncertain as to what, if anything occurred in terms of then-Captain Harriman being responsible for the mistaken rumors about the nature of Investigator LeRette's (unsuccessful) request for an injunction. The key witness connecting Harriman to the claim was Ms. Jones. In her interview, the lone comment she specifically referenced not only depended on insinuation and inference (as opposed to a direct act of misinformation) but also, in her recollection, connected back to LeRette's civil lawsuit and not the TRO issue. While that confusion may have been the product of simple misremembering and/or conflation of incidents, at best it is a slender peg on which to hold Harriman accountable for misconduct.

For his part, then-Captain Harriman strongly denied it when asked, and cited the reality that discussion of the injunction request, and the spreading of actual or inaccurate information about it, was a likely function of widespread awareness of it through court records.

Investigator LeRette's concerns were seemingly sincere, particularly within the context of her overall strained relations with then-Captain Harriman and the tension over his records request. It also seems true that upsetting and inaccurate rumors apparently were indeed circulating within the agency (thus prompting an official response from the Chief). But the weight of the evidence suggests that the allegation of misconduct against now-Sergeant Harriman should be "Unfounded."

**Janigo, Cammi L.**

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**From:** Prell, Frog  
**Sent:** Friday, March 21, 2025 9:28 AM  
**To:** Janigo, Cammi L.  
**Cc:** Paine, Jim  
**Subject:** FW: Continued Harassment

Good morning.

We should discuss soon.

Frog Prell  
City Attorney, City of Superior  
1316 N. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 301  
Superior, WI 54880  
P: 715-395-7214

**From:** Mikayla LeRette <mikayla.lerette@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 20, 2025 2:59 PM  
**To:** Paine, Jim <painej@superiorwi.gov>; Prell, Frog <prellf@superiorwi.gov>  
**Subject:** Continued Harassment

All,

Per my email on February 27th, 2025, regarding continued harassment and retaliatory behavior, and now confirmed, that no one cares, I am left with no choice but to file a formal complaint with the Police and Fire Commission for continued violations of department policy by members of the administration.

I will no longer continue to be bullied, harassed, and defamed by members of the Superior Police Department's administration. I have become a source of entertainment for Captain Harriman specifically. Captain Harriman's actions lead me to believe that he is totally consumed and obsessed with me, with no intentions of backing down. The lengths Captain Harriman has taken to tarnish my reputation in the law enforcement community, is sickening and despicable on both a personal and professional level. Captain Harriman's behavior has tarnished the reputation of the Superior Police Department amongst the law enforcement community. Just so there is no uncertainty, I am writing to you the specific complaints as to the on-going concerns with Captain Harriman.

In September of 2025: Captain Harriman contacted Sgt. Wilson of the Lake Superior Violent Offender Task Force (LSVOTF) and accused him and LSVOTF Task Force Lieutenant, Tanksi, of "leaking the name of Daniel Hardman" to Inv. LeRette. Sgt. Wilson told Captain Harriman he never said a word about who "Daniel Hardman" was or even remembered his name. Captain Harriman then quickly accused Lieutenant Tanski of exposing Daniel Hardman's identity. Interesting... Why would he care so much about the identity of Daniel Hardman? Well now, we all know the answer to this.

In November of 2025: Captain Harriman told Sgt. Wilson that Investigator LeRette was "too good" to work for the Lake Superior Violent Offender Task Force. Captain Harriman suggested to Sgt. Wilson that he remove my desk from the task force office and not allow me to continue working as a task force investigator. This conversation was after I had been selected to be a Task Force Officer with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

Numerous members of the LSVOTF are Task Force Officers. This is a federally deputized position, which pulls resources directly to the Superior Police Department. This is a position that Chief Alexander signed off on in September of 2023.

Another disturbing comment from Captain Harriman to Sgt. Wilson was regarding my schedule moving forward after I returned from a punitive administrative leave status. Sgt. Wilson wished to clarify Superior's expectations moving forward of my scheduling requirements. Captain Harriman told Sgt. Wilson "Why don't you just ask Investigator LeRette's husband" for any questions regarding me and my schedule moving forward. This is nothing short of unprofessional. This is an embarrassing representation for the City of Superior.

11/18/25: Captain Harriman told me, in the presence of Detective Coffman, as my supervisor, "I am not dealing with your schedule, your husband can take care of that".

In November of 2025: In the presence of Officer Cicioria and Officer Robinson, I asked HR Director Janigo how to pursue a complaint on Captain Harriman, as I had learned he took it upon himself to discuss details of my internal investigation with subordinate members of the Superior Police Department, further tarnishing my reputation. Captain Harriman had already been directed in an email sent to all command staff members and sergeants by Assistant Chief Kiel (now retired) not to discuss my internal investigation. I received zero follow up or help with this matter from HR Director Janigo.

January of 2025: I informed HR Director Janigo that Capt. Harriman and Lt. Pope seemed to not be approving my overtime or answering questions regarding my schedule. This was noticed by Sgt. Rude and Sgt. Poskozim who took it upon themselves to approve my overtime/time off submissions. Zero follow up was conducted.

In January of 2025: Sgt. Wilson and Lt. Tanksi contacted Captain Harriman, asking why I was still not able to write warrants and continued experiencing push-back from my internal investigation. Captain Harriman more or less stated this was complicated, but then said "let me ask you a question, did Mikayla apply with Duluth Police or St. Louis County?" Why is this an appropriate question of a supervisor so involved in my personal life and business?

In February of 2025: I received information from Administrative Assistant Nikki Kalan that Captain Harriman discussed with her (out of nowhere, seemingly to vent regarding his obsession with me) about how he planned to take me to court for my open records request. He said that I intended to block the release of my internal investigation and he would be pursuing me in court.

In February of 2025: Sgt. Poskozim told me that Captain Harriman was openly discussing his open records request against me, including the details of this request, in the hallway of the Superior Police Department amongst others. This was during the middle of the day while he was on duty, for whomever to hear.

In March of 2025: CRS Jones told me Captain Harriman was in the squad room, purposefully misrepresenting and spreading rumors about a TRO that I had to file with the Police Department to block the release of my untruthful, biased, defamatory, internal investigation from Captain Harriman. Captain Harriman decided to spread rumors about how "Inv. LeRette filed a TRO against her husband (Paul Winterschedit)." Captain Harriman knew exactly what this TRO was for, yet took it upon himself to paint the picture I had filed a TRO against my husband, representing a domestic form of the TRO, further to cause me and Chief Winterschiedt harm in the police department and community. Captain Harriman involved himself in gossip and further discussion as a CAPTAIN on the police department, to paint the picture as I had filed a restraining order on my own husband.

This "rumor" went so far as to spread to the Douglas County Jail, Douglas County Sheriff's Department, Superior Police Records Division. This resulted in Chief Winterscheidt having to put out a department wide email to clarify the TRO I had filed and the reasons behind it.

I can only imagine what Captain Harriman intends to do if/when he obtains a copy of the internal investigation report. Why is he so fixated on harming my reputation? How is this behavior allowed to continue or be tolerated? Why do I have to continue to endure never ending retaliation, shunning, harassment, and defamation from a Captain of the Superior Police Department? I think I have gone through my fair share of scrutiny from a targeted and unjustified internal investigation.

I also learned that Captain Harriman invited Lt. Nagorski (now retired) of the LSVOTF to the Superior Police Department in Spring of 2024. Captain Harriman told Lt. Nagorski that he had been investigating me, and had concerns with my work performance. Interestingly enough, Captain Harriman never approached me, counseled me, or had any conversation with me about his perceived "concerns". Lt. Nagorski said he couldn't believe that Captain Harriman was doing these things and I was unaware, or had been made aware of what had been going on. Lt. Nagorski also stated he couldn't believe how the SPD administration was keeping this all from Chief Winterscheidt.

Not surprisingly, I learned that Captain Harriman also took it upon himself to discuss me with Duluth Police Deputy Chief Lukosky. Unfortunately, Captain Harriman did not take any advice given by Deputy Chief Lukosky.

I used to think highly of the City of Superior. I used to enjoy working here. I have put in a lot of years on the police department to make the community a better place. In return, this is what I have been given. I will not be silent any longer.

Respectfully,

Mikayla LeRette

# Independent Investigation into Allegations of Misconduct Involving Superior Police Department Member Michelle Pope

January 2026

Independent Investigators  
Michael Gennaco  
Stephen Connolly





6510 Spring Street #613

Long Beach, CA 90815

[OIRGroup.com](http://OIRGroup.com)

## Overview:

This investigation was initiated in response to allegations that were raised at various times in 2025 by (now former) Superior Police Department ("SPD" or "the Department") Investigator Mikayla LeRette.<sup>1</sup> While some of the claims implicated personnel who are no longer with the agency, others involved current employees and, if true, could lead to administrative discipline for violations of Department policy. Accordingly, the investigation was conducted in keeping with the relevant employees' formal rights and obligations under state law and SPD policy.

The subject employee in this report is Assistant Chief Michelle Pope. The allegations arise from periods of time when she was at a previous rank level.<sup>2</sup>

Events relevant to the misconduct allegations occurred over an extended period. The following timeline is meant to provide a framework for the analysis of individual issues, and is intended as a factual, objective depiction of matters that participants may have perceived or interpreted in contrasting ways.

November of 2022: Investigator LeRette returns from [REDACTED] leave and begins a light duty assignment that lasts until December. She also attempts to find a suitable lactation space during this time.

September of 2023: Investigators LeRette and Ron Custer meet with then-Lt. Pope to discuss productivity concerns in relation to their work in narcotics investigations.

December of 2023: Investigator LeRette is re-assigned to the Lake Superior Violent Offender Task Force per the decision of incoming Chief Paul Winterscheidt.

January of 2024: Paul Winterscheidt officially takes over as Chief of SPD, and Investigator LeRette begins her work with the Task Force, reporting to offices in Duluth, MN.

February-March 2024: Captain Tom Champaigne begins to track the working schedule of Investigator LeRette and identifies what he considers to be discrepancies between

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<sup>1</sup> Investigator LeRette resigned from the Department in September of 2025.

<sup>2</sup> She was a lieutenant at the time of many of the events at issue in this case, and was a captain at the time of her interview for this investigation in July of 2025.

reported and actual time on-duty. His investigative efforts include the placing of a GPS tracker on Investigator LeRette's work vehicle.

March 2024: Prior to his retirement, Captain Champaigne discusses his concerns about Investigator LeRette's attendance with his replacement, Jeff Harriman.

June 2024: Investigator LeRette goes on [REDACTED] leave for her second child. Captain Harriman gives additional attention to Investigator LeRette's attendance records, and develops his own questions about seeming discrepancies or inconsistencies.

July 2024: Captain Harriman comes to believe a formal investigation is needed into possible misconduct. Because of Chief Winterscheidt's spousal relationship with Investigator LeRette, Captain Harriman brings his concerns to the attention of Assistant Chief John Kiel instead, as well as the City Attorney (Frog Prell) and Human Resources Director (Cammi Janigo).

July 2024: The City hires an outside investigator (Daniel Hardman) to conduct an administrative investigation into the potential violation of several Department policies by Investigator LeRette.

September 2024: Investigator LeRette returns from [REDACTED] leave and is placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation. She and the labor association file a grievance, challenging different procedural aspects of the City's actions. On September 26, she is interviewed by Daniel Hardman.

October 2024-January 2025: The completed investigation is pending a resolution. Potential settlements are discussed, but do not come to fruition.

January 2025: After a meeting with Investigator LeRette, Mayor Paine (acting as the decision-maker in the case) issues a two-page "written warning" as a consequence for two identified policy violations: 320.5.1 ("Laws, Rules and Orders") and 320.5.5 ("Attendance.")

February 2025: Investigator LeRette writes and submits a lengthy "Rebuttal" to the findings of the internal investigation against her; in addition to challenging the validity of Daniel Hardman's case memo and its conclusions, she makes several allegations of mistreatment and wrongful conduct directed against her by current (as well as past) SPD members.<sup>3</sup>

February 2025: Investigator LeRette files a Temporary Restraining Order in response to Captain Harriman's attempts to secure a copy of the Hardman case memo through a Public Records request.

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<sup>3</sup> A copy of that letter is attached as Exhibit 1.

March 2025: Investigator LeRette files a federal civil rights lawsuit against the City and former Captain Champaigne, based on the City's alleged failure to meet its obligations in providing a suitable lactation space, and for the allegedly unlawful placing of a tracking device on her work vehicle.

March 2025: Investigator LeRette sends an email to the Mayor and City Attorney, alleging multiple instances of "harassment and retaliatory" behavior, several of which are focused on Captain Harriman.

As mentioned above, former Investigator LeRette's range of allegations included claims that related to two current SPD members and had the potential to constitute administratively sanctionable violations of Department policy. This investigation was framed accordingly. Relevant sources of information included Investigator LeRette's above-referenced written submissions, as well as a formal investigative interview of her as a witness/complainant, and documentation and suggestions about possible witnesses that she subsequently provided to the OIR Group investigators.<sup>4</sup>

## **Subject Employee Assistant Chief Michelle Pope:**

Assistant Chief Pope was promoted to her current rank in 2025. During a previous tenure as a lieutenant, she spent time as Investigator LeRette's supervisor, which provided the forum for the managerial decisions and interactions that gave rise to several of Investigator LeRette's allegations of mistreatment. In the different contexts mentioned above, Investigator LeRette specified the behaviors and incidents she considered objectionable, and these are discussed in more detail below. Taken collectively, they assert that Pope was unfairly hostile to Investigator LeRette in ways that manifested themselves variously and to Investigator LeRette's detriment. These included the following:

- Requiring Investigator LeRette to provide her work schedule one month in advance while similarly situated employees were given more leeway.
- Inappropriately attempting to force Investigator LeRette to assume a light duty assignment and a removal from her narcotics assignment due to her [REDACTED]

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<sup>4</sup> Then-Investigator LeRette was interviewed for this investigation on July 7, 2025. A written summary of that interview is attached as Exhibit 2.

- Inappropriately restricting Investigator LeRette's flexible work schedule.
- Applying additional light-duty restrictions on Investigator LeRette that were not medically necessary or uniformly applied to other officers.
- Assigning Investigator LeRette to the property room light duty assignment as punishment, without any attempt to provide reasonable accommodation.
- On November 8, 2022, yelling at Investigator LeRette in front of records staff and asking her why she wasn't conducting training.
- Requiring Investigator LeRette to wear uniform pants while working the property room while others did not have the same requirements.
- Asking Investigator LeRette to explain her medical note in violation of her privacy rights.
- Failing to take action even after being advised that the lactation space assigned to Investigator LeRette did not meet federal requirements.
- Refusing to sign off on overtime and time off requests.

Several SPD policies (and state requirements) were implicated by one or more of these allegations. They included the following:

Superior Police Department Policy 320(d): Standards of Conduct

Superior Police Department Policy 320.5.2(b) and (g): Ethics

Superior Police Department Policy 320.5.2: Discrimination, Oppression, or Favoritism

Superior Police Department Policy 320.5.8(d) and (e): Performance

Superior Police Department Policy 320.5.9(a) and (f): Conduct

Superior Police Policy 1004: Anti-Retaliation

Superior Police Policy 1004.3: Retaliation Prohibited

Superior Police Policy 02.02: Anti-Harassment/Sexual Harassment

Superior Police Policy 02.04: Reasonable Accommodation Policy

██████████ Discrimination Act of 1978: Title VII of the National Civil Rights Act

Wisconsin Fair Employment Act

Some of the allegations arose from a pattern of behavior, while others related more to discrete issues. We begin with the latter.

### ***Improper Efforts to Remove from Narcotics Unit During First [REDACTED]***

Investigator LeRette was working in Superior's Narcotics unit at the time of her first [REDACTED]. She alleged that, when that status became known, it prompted Captain Champaigne and then-Lt. Pope to go to the City's Human Resources department and improperly attempt to have her removed from her assignment.

Captain Pope addressed this question during her subject interview, which was conducted remotely on July 18, 2025.<sup>5</sup> She acknowledged bringing the issue to HR (along with Captain Champaigne), but claims that it was out of concern for the health of Investigator LeRette and the unborn child. She cited the fact that this was "new ground" in the sense that she was not aware of any other SPD officer having been pregnant during her 23 years with the Department. She said that when they asked HR Director Cammi Janigo about the situation, they were told that it was not a decision they had control over, any more than they had the authority to pronounce someone well enough to return to work after a surgery. Captain Pope explained that this made sense to her, and she did nothing further on the issue. This version of events was corroborated by former Captain Champaigne during his interview for this investigation.

Former Chief Alexander also discussed this issue in his interview for this case. He remembers then-Lt. Pope coming to him to express concern about the advisability of LeRette's continuing in the Narcotics role while pregnant, but was firm in denying that there was discussion of or an attempt to remove her from the position.

**Analysis:** The efforts by then-Lt. Pope and others to clarify the authority or responsibility of SPD management regarding the duty status of a pregnant officer appear to have been reasonable on their face. While Investigator LeRette has asserted that the move was animated by hostility toward her, and prompted later efforts at retaliation that were unsuccessful, the evidence does not establish this beyond her theory. Moreover, by her own account, it was Captain Champaigne (and not then Lt. Pope) who was most "upfront" with her in characterizing the outreach to HR as an attempt to "force her out."

Whatever the motive, questions about the health and well-being of a pregnant officer were objectively plausible, and uncertainty about how to proceed would credibly have been a function of the agency's lack of direct experience with the issue. Perhaps most significantly, there is no dispute about the fact that the meeting with HR and the

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<sup>5</sup> A written summary of that interview is attached as Exhibit 3.

clarification about relevant legalities ended the discussion. Any allegation of impropriety by Captain Pope in this context is "Unfounded."

***Improper "Yelling" on November 8, 2022:***

Investigator LeRette described one particular encounter as being particularly inappropriate. That was the November 8, 2022, incident cited above, which occurred on her first day back from [REDACTED] leave. In her witness interview, she said that then-Lt. Pope essentially yelled at her when finding her in the Records Bureau as she was showing pictures of her baby to colleagues.

One of the percipient witnesses to that event was Detective Kelsey Davis, whom Investigator LeRette recommended as a source to corroborate her memory of that experience. In an interview conducted remotely on August 14, 2025,<sup>6</sup> Detective Davis was questioned about that specific encounter, as well as her more general impressions of the ways in which Investigator LeRette was treated by then-Lt. Pope.

Detective Davis characterized her relationship with Investigator LeRette as being "friendly," but said that they were not close friends. She did recall the event on November 8, 2022, but seemed to have a different impression of it. Her recollection was that then-Lt. Pope asked *both* of them where they were supposed to be, and described it as being more of an inquiry. Detective Davis found it consistent with her own longstanding experience of interacting with then-Lt. Pope, and did not have the impression that it was targeted specifically at Investigator LeRette or indicative of a distinctive hostility. She did recall Investigator LeRette expressing her impressions of being singled out for negative attention by then-Lt. Pope, but it did not resonate with Detective Davis's sense of the situation.

Captain Pope had a detailed recollection of the incident during her own interview as a subject of the investigation. She asserted that she went to the records bureau to clarify for then-Officer Davis and Investigator LeRette that they had to do their required online training separately and not at the same computer. She described Investigator LeRette as having "snapped" at her in response, and strongly disagreed that she had been yelling at either officer.

**Analysis:** While this incident reflected an unfortunate disconnect between Investigator LeRette (who was newly returned to work and sharing pictures of her baby) and Captain Pope (who was focused on a specific job-related issue), the preponderance of the evidence indicates that the interaction was well within the normal parameters of

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<sup>6</sup> A written summary of that interview's contents is attached as Exhibit 4.

supervision. It was neither hostile nor targeting of Investigator LeRette, and did not violate any potentially relevant policy.

***Inappropriate Questioning about Medical Status:***

In her lengthy letter to the Mayor (the "Internal Investigation Report Rebuttal"), Investigator LeRette described a specific encounter with then Lt. Pope that allegedly occurred after Investigator LeRette was able to secure a re-assignment out of the property room during the pendency of her "light duty" status in late 2022. At the suggestion of then-Chief Alexander, Investigator LeRette had received a letter from her health care provider citing a medical basis for not working in the property room.

When the change to a different assignment had occurred, Lt. Pope allegedly called Investigator LeRette into her office to express suspicions about the legitimacy of the move, and allegedly asked for an explanation about the medical note she had received. In Investigator LeRette's "Rebuttal" letter, she described challenging Lt. Pope at that point for seemingly making improper inquiries about private medical information, and claimed that Lt. Pope had "immediately back pedaled" and suggested the conversation had "gotten off on the wrong foot." This was taken by Investigator LeRette as another indication of improper animus that Lt. Pope felt and directed toward her.

In her subject interview, Captain Pope did not recall having a related conversation about the medical note. However, when the LeRette version of events was described to her in more detail, she rejected it as "a 100% lie."

**Analysis:** The evidence for this incident is divided to the point of uncertainty, since the competing accounts of the two principals are neither reconcilable nor corroborated by outside sources. Importantly, though, Investigator LeRette's own description of events, even if true, seems to stop short of an actionable policy violation. A question about the particulars of a medical note with a direct bearing on work restrictions seems understandable – as does Investigator LeRette's strong inclination toward exercising her own privacy rights. Assuming it was mistaken of then-Lt. Pope to raise the issue in the manner she did, her prompt deference to Investigator LeRette's objections (again, per Investigator LeRette's account) seems to mitigate the severity of that lapse. This allegation is accordingly "Unfounded." Any remaining significance would be as an example of a mindset marked by hostility, bias, or retaliation – an alleged dynamic (denied by Captain Pope) that manifested more directly in other claims by Investigator LeRette that are discussed above and below.

### ***Inadequate Facilitation of Lactation Space:***

As noted above, Investigator LeRette returned from her first [REDACTED] leave in November of 2022, at which point she was being supervised by then-Lt. Pope. She was breastfeeding her child during the ensuing months, and needed a place where she could express and preserve breastmilk while on duty.

In her February 2025 "rebuttal" letter to the Mayor, Investigator LeRette included references to then-Lt. Pope as being responsible for the inadequate space that was offered in response to her request for accommodation. She characterized then-Lt. Pope as being unsupportive (an interpretation Investigator LeRette gleaned from Pope's disclosure of her own experience as a young mother, in which she allegedly claimed to have been too busy with work (in the private sector) to pursue breastfeeding.) She also cited Lt. Pope as being unresponsive to her repeated assertions that the arrangements she was using were inadequate and out of compliance with federal requirements.

Lastly, as further indication of Pope's alleged resistance to appropriate breastfeeding facilities, the letter cited Pope's request to be part of the lactation space committee that was implemented by Chief Winterscheidt upon his promotion. LeRette said she was told that Pope was "argumentative" in her opposition to the (allegedly required) inclusion of a sink in the proposed facility.

The lactation issue was a major component of the federal lawsuit Investigator LeRette filed in March of 2025.

In her formal interview for this investigation, Investigator LeRette described then-Lt. Pope as having "mocked" her when she was first attempting to establish a space to breastfeed by making a point of moving a small chair for her so as not to clash with LeRette's work restrictions on lifting. Investigator LeRette interpreted this as sarcastic, and considered it to be consistent with "two years" worth of reflexive negativity that she experienced as then-Lt. Pope's subordinate.

In her interview, Captain Pope recalled the issue of the lactation space, but said she had never discussed it directly with Investigator LeRette. Instead, it was something that was talked about at various times among the command staff, and she participated in those conversations.

She described the need for such as space as something the Department had not dealt with in recent memory, so that there was nothing established. She said she was not involved in Investigator LeRette's having ended up in the women's locker room for that purpose, but became aware that it was proving unsatisfactory. Captain Pope claimed Chief Alexander was the "driving force" behind the Department's response to the issue. (This was separately confirmed by Chief Alexander in his own interview for this case.)

Captain Pope described the alternative options that were proposed and then declined by Investigator LeRette. She said this was done by Chief Alexander through outreach to City HR, and cited an email that came from an HR staff person that said facilitating space in another part of the building would not be a problem.<sup>7</sup>

When asked directly about whether she believed the Department had met its responsibilities under state, federal, and City law, Captain Pope answered, "Yes." She explained the distinction in her mind between directing someone to use the locker room (which would not have been permissible) and allowing it to go on, once an appropriate alternative had been identified, offered, and declined by the affected person.

**Analysis:** While then-Lt. Pope was cited by Investigator LeRette as being one of the parties responsible for the failure to provide her with a required and appropriate accommodation to breastfeed, the scope of her decision-making authority and influence on the outcome that later became a source of contention (and litigation) seems to have been limited. Investigator LeRette's own version of events lists Pope as just one of the parties who failed to take the requisite action to ensure a suitable space. It is undisputed that Chief Alexander and City HR were actively aware of and involved in the City's response to the concern.

Without needing to address the legal question of whether that response was sufficient, there is no evidence to suggest that Pope reacted to or influenced matters in ways that controverted or superseded the decision-making of parties (including the Chief of Police) who had more authority in the matter. Captain Pope's denial of direct conversation with Investigator LeRette on the topic differs slightly from LeRette's version. But that version itself relies heavily on interpretation or assumptions about Captain Pope's larger intent – and even if true does not rise to the level of actionable misconduct. This allegation is accordingly "Unfounded."

### ***Improper Imposition of Disparate Expectations/Notification Requirements***

Some of Investigator LeRette's allegations of mistreatment relate to the expectations imposed on her by then-Lt. Pope when it came to providing information about different aspects of her schedule. Investigator LeRette considered the notification requirements to be a function of Lt. Pope's animosity toward her, and were allegedly inconsistent with the way similarly situated members of the agency were/had been treated by management.

In her Rebuttal letter to the Mayor, Investigator LeRette cited the requirement that was imposed on her by then-Lt. Pope that she provide her schedule a month in advance – a requirement that she said was more stringent than that of similarly situated Department

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<sup>7</sup> A copy of a relevant email chain is attached as Exhibit 5.

members (two of whom she cited by name). This was an example of the disparate treatment that she believed was animated by an improper hostility toward her.

In her interview for this investigation, Captain Pope acknowledged that she and Captain Champaigne had asked for this from Investigator LeRette, and agreed that it was distinctive. However, she said this was a function of LeRette's own unique scheduling needs, which tended to vary in ways that others did not. She asserted that the purpose was just to give supervision some basic sense of what could be expected, and that the requirement did not preclude any necessary changes from occurring or being approved as they may have arisen.

**Analysis:** Aspects of this claim are not in dispute: the requirement was imposed, and was unique to Investigator LeRette. However (apart from its being a decision that came from Captain Champaigne), the purpose does not appear to have been unreasonable in nature, unduly rigid, or punitive in its effects. Any allegation of misconduct is therefore "Exonerated."

### ***Deliberate Ignoring of Overtime/Time off Requests***

In her "Rebuttal" letter to the Mayor, Investigator LeRette alleged that both Captain Harriman and then-Lt. Pope refused to approve her overtime and time-off requests. (Her specific focus was on the time after she had returned from administrative leave in late 2024). She claimed the problem became noticeable to the point where lower-ranking supervisors asked permission to take over the responsibility and ensure that the requests were appropriately addressed. She reiterated this allegation in an email to the Mayor and the City Attorney, and said that she had brought the issue up to the City's HR Director in January of 2025 (which she said resulted in no apparent follow-up).

HR Director Cammi Janigo was asked about this in a discussion with us on July 10, 2025; she said she recalled the issue being raised, but was focused on whether there had been any adverse consequences.<sup>8</sup> She said that, per Investigator LeRette herself, she had indeed been paid in keeping with the overtime claims she had submitted.

We also interviewed Sergeant Adam Poskozim about this issue; he had been identified by Investigator LeRette as a knowledgeable witness to her concerns.<sup>9</sup> He was also an experienced supervisor who was well-versed in the mechanics of the Department's overtime system.

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<sup>8</sup> This conversation was not conducted as a formal interview.

<sup>9</sup> This interview was conducted remotely on August 14, 2025. A written summary is included as Exhibit 6.

When asked about the importance of timeliness in the approval of overtime submissions, Sgt. Poskozim said that it should ideally happen within the same calendar week of the request to avoid confusion, but that a later approval would not preclude compensation for the overtime worked. As for time-off requests, those were expected to be submitted 24 hours before planned time off. While approvals were not a prerequisite to the person taking the time (if having submitted the request), the process was important in the patrol setting in order to ensure minimum staffing.

Sgt. Poskozim was asked specifically about his direct experience with Investigator LeRette regarding overtime submissions. He said that he does have authority to approve people's paperwork even if they are not in his chain, and is sometimes asked by officers to perform this function. He was asked whether he had performed this function for Investigator LeRette.

While he professed to be quite sure he had done this for Investigator LeRette (as well as Investigator Tim Monte, who also worked in the Duluth Task Force), he did not have a specific recollection of particular times or a sense of being personally aware of her being treated differently (or mistreated).<sup>10</sup> He also said that he had much less direct contact with her than he once did, primarily because her assignment brought her to the station in Superior very rarely.

Asked about this issue in her investigative interview, Captain Pope denied the allegation that she was maliciously or otherwise unresponsive to Investigator LeRette's requests. She said she was unaware of any concern about this subject until she received notification of her status as a subject in investigation.

In preparing for the interview, she had found extensive email correspondence between herself and Investigator LeRette, which she provided to us.<sup>11</sup> The emails concerned time-off and schedule deviations of various kinds, and featured requests and responses. Captain Pope considered this to be evidence of her appropriate responsiveness, and characterizes any assertions to the contrary as being untrue.

Investigator LeRette has also named then-Captain Jeff Harriman as being similarly neglectful of her requests for managerial approvals of overtime or time off. Harriman was asked about this in his own interview as a subject of this investigation. He claimed to have looked into the issue, and asserted that the maximum delay in any approval of

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<sup>10</sup> He did acknowledge having spoken with Investigator LeRette about her perceptions, and was generally aware of her sense that she was being singled out and treated in a discriminatory fashion.

<sup>11</sup> That email chain is attached as Exhibit 7.

related requests by LeRette was two days – a duration he said was commensurate with the turnaround for other personnel.

Captain Pope also said in her interview that, as a practical matter, the pre-approval of time off was a non-issue. Personnel were entitled to it, and the implications of investigators being off were significantly different from the patrol context (where staffing requirements would be more likely to result in denials).

**Analysis:** The available evidence does not show that the alleged neglect of Investigator LeRette's requests for approvals of overtime and time off resulted in concrete adverse consequences. (Nor is it as serious in its implications as an unjustified *rejection* of those requests would be.) While this lack of practical impact is significant, it is also somewhat peripheral to Investigator LeRette's contention regarding her sense of harm. Instead, she perceived the alleged ignoring of her requests as a specific example of a larger paradigm in which then-Lieutenant Pope singled her out for mistreatment across a range of contexts.

Deliberate non-engagement with reasonable work requests from a subordinate could potentially rise to the level of actionable misconduct. However, there is not conclusive evidence that this non-responsiveness occurred at all, or was malicious in its intent (if in fact gaps in timely approval happened).

Then-Captain Pope professed in her interview to be unaware of the issue until being informed of the allegation for purposes of this investigation. She denied both the substance of the neglect and the existence of any intent to harm LeRette by failing to be appropriately responsive to these routine scheduling requests. Nor did Sergeant Poskozim (who was specifically cited by Investigator LeRette as a percipient witness) corroborate the contention that this was an obvious problem that required his intervention.

The emails to us provided by then-Captain Pope are helpful – to an extent. It seems noteworthy that the most recent was from July of 2024, which was *prior to* the specific period cited by Investigator LeRette in her allegations. Obviously, more current examples would be more probative, and their absence has potential significance. At the same time, the emails that were provided support her claims of appropriate responsiveness. Importantly, their tone is also consistently polite and professional, and they overlap with a period which Investigator LeRette has characterized as part of a consistent pattern of hostility and negativity that she experienced.

In the absence of a concrete showing of harm, or definitive proof to the contrary, the balance of the evidence suggests that this allegation should be "Unfounded."



Asked about Investigator LeRette's point that she had been allowed to wear leggings while pregnant, Captain Pope acknowledged that this was true, and said the same accommodation had subsequently been given to another pregnant officer. But she drew a distinction between being pregnant and then returning to work after [REDACTED] leave, and said she did not think it was unreasonable to require pants.

Several weeks after being interviewed, Captain Pope provided us with an email that had other information relevant to the light duty issues. That correspondence is attached as Exhibit 8.

Its contents included a forwarded email that had been written by Captain Champaigne at the time of Investigator LeRette's November of 2022 tenure in the property room. It was addressed to both LeRette and Officer Kelsey Davis (who was also on light duty and also assigned to the property room – as she had been earlier that year). It referenced an attachment about uniform standards and the need to project a "professional image."

In that same correspondence, Captain Pope rebutted the assertion that she had given preferential treatment to others. She said her rationale for not putting Investigator LeRette in some sort of investigative role during her light duty period was partly out of fairness to LeRette's then-partner Ron Custer, who had been returned to patrol because he was missing a partner during LeRette's [REDACTED] leave.

Our witness interview with Detective Kelsey Davis also addressed this issue. (Her name had specifically been suggested to us by Investigator LeRette.)

Davis recalled her tenure in the property room, which overlapped with that of Investigator LeRette by what she estimated was a couple of weeks. She said she was operating under the same restrictions as Investigator LeRette. She recalled LeRette's unhappiness with the assignment, and said LeRette had spoken to her about how both would be better utilized elsewhere. Detective Davis's recollection was that LeRette had told her that complaining about the assignment could effectuate a change, and that she was going to speak to then-Captain Winterscheidt about it.

Asked whether she thought Investigator LeRette had been treated differently, she agreed – but shared the view that she believed any differences had been to LeRette's advantage. She herself considered asking for a change of light duty assignment, but decided against it.

**Analysis:** However sincere Investigator LeRette's perception of an underlying animus, the evidence does not support the contention that her light duty assignment to the property room (and the uniform requirements that accompanied it) was improper, unreasonable, or disparate. This allegation is accordingly "Unfounded."

### ***Inappropriate Restrictions on Flexible Schedule:***

In her Rebuttal letter to the Mayor, Investigator LeRette took exception to what she considered to be an impermissible change to expectations regarding notifications and documentations of her work schedule. She elaborated on this during her witness interview for this investigation.

She referred to an email sent in March of 2024 by then-Lt. Pope that went out all investigators and referenced notification and pre-approval requirements for deviations from their respective set schedules. Investigator LeRette believed this was in reference to shifts between a 4-10 and 5-8 work week, and had the sense that it was targeted at her. She said she later learned that then-Lt. Pope was supposed to speak to her about schedule deviation issues, but never did, and instead addressed the issue in the March email.

This flexibility issue was discussed during a witness interview on July 8, 2025 with Investigator Tim Monte, who was also assigned to the Duluth Task Force during the period in question.<sup>12</sup> Monte understood the email's intent to be more broad, to include any significant deviations from the set daily schedule (such as a doctor's appointment or a surveillance that occurred outside of regular hours). He said his impression was that this was a change in expectations, and that "something was up," but he was not told it had anything to do with Investigator LeRette in particular. (Instead, he attributed it at the time to another Task Force member being accused of "stealing time.")

Investigator Monte found the new expectations to be cumbersome and stressful, and an awkward fit for the requisite flexibility required of narcotics work. He said that Chief Winterscheidt had recently reversed this directive. In Monte's mind, this was a welcome return to a paradigm he considered more familiar and appropriate.

In her interview for this investigation, Lt. Pope acknowledged having drafted the March 2024 email to all investigative personnel in her chain of command. She also said it was motivated by the concerns that had been raised by Captain Champaigne about potential time accuracy issues involving Investigator LeRette and her new assignment in the Task Force. However, she characterized it more as a reminder of existing expectations than an imposition of new requirements.

**Analysis:** Though the contractual authority to impose new standards on hours worked was raised by Investigator LeRette as a potential issue,<sup>13</sup> the notion of past practice and the distinctive nature of investigative work vis a vis scheduling and timekeeping were

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<sup>12</sup> A written summary of that interview is attached as Exhibit 9

<sup>13</sup> Chief Winterscheidt's 2025 directive that returned matters to the earlier approach is noteworthy (and presumably could have occurred earlier).

primarily relevant to allegations that Investigator LeRette had willfully misrepresented her work hours after transferring to the Duluth Task Force.

As for the significance of the March 2024 email, its import (though apparently understood differently by different recipients, and arguably a new arrangement rather than a reminder of existing expectations), was neither unreasonable nor disparately applied. Accordingly, as an issue of mistreatment by Investigator LeRette at the hands of then-Lt. Pope, the allegation is "Unfounded."

**To: Mayor Jim Paine**  
**City of Superior**

**From: Investigator Mikayla LeRette**  
**Superior Police Department**

**Re: Internal Investigation Report Rebuttal**

Dear Mayor Paine,

This rebuttal letter addresses the internal investigation report and investigation that was conducted against me. I am writing you this letter to make you aware of the misconduct I have discovered by several members of the Superior Police Department's administration. This rebuttal letter was also shared with Douglas County District Attorney, Mark Fruehauf. I firmly contest any assertion of untruthfulness or falsification of records on my part. This rebuttal will highlight a systematic pattern of misconduct by the City of Superior administration and its purportedly neutral third-party investigator. Whether driven by malice or incompetence, their actions have resulted in an unjustified attack on my character and reputation.

I believe this rebuttal will clearly demonstrate that the principal figures in this investigation pursued it as part of a concerted effort to retaliate against me. They sought to punish me for my pregnancies, my use of Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) time for [REDACTED] related matters, and my necessary light-duty status while recovering. Additionally, I will show a pattern of retaliation linked to my relationship with Chief Winterscheidt following his internal promotions and my vocal concerns regarding violations of my lactation rights.

Furthermore, this rebuttal will expose investigatory misconduct, including deliberate omissions of exculpatory witness statements, misleading statements, intentional disregard for exculpatory evidence, and misrepresentation of facts. Ultimately, I believe their conclusions are biased and fail to logically align with the evidence.

I do not make this claim lightly, but I believe the Mayor was misled by members of his administration in a deliberate effort to tarnish my reputation. Their actions amount to serious misconduct.

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**Background:**

I began my career with the Superior Police Department in April of 2013. During the following years, I built a reputation as a competent, hard-working police officer. I was assigned to be a Narcotics Investigator in January 2020 by then-Chief Nicholas Alexander. My direct supervisor on the Superior Police Department was Lieutenant Michelle Pope. I was assigned to the Superior Police Department's internal narcotics investigation team. At that time, the Department assigned two narcotics investigators to the Northern Area Crime Unit (NACU). NACU was a non-centralized taskforce consisting of several agencies from the region. Investigators assigned to this taskforce were housed in their respective agencies. Investigator Ronald Custer was my partner for the majority of my time in the NACU taskforce. The Superior Police Department assigned a third investigator to the neighboring Lake Superior Violent Offender Taskforce (LSVOF), which is a centralized narcotics taskforce hosted by the Duluth Police Department. Investigator Tim Monte was assigned to the LSVOF taskforce.

In September of 2023, I was invited by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to become a DEA Taskforce Officer (TFO). Then-Chief Alexander supported this opportunity and signed the associated agreements. At that time, the DEA TFO position was housed at the LSVOF taskforce. Shortly thereafter, the TFO position was moved to the newly created drug taskforce in Carlton, MN. This DEA taskforce maintained jurisdictional responsibility for Douglas County, WI.

During the third quarter of 2023, the State of Wisconsin changed the grant that supported NACU was changed in a way that made it financially impractical for the Superior Police Department to continue participation in the NACU taskforce. The NACU taskforce was dissolved. I am aware through conversations with Chief Winterscheidt that newly selected (but not yet appointed) Chief Winterscheidt discussed options with then-Chief Alexander, then-Captain Thomas Champaigne, as well as leadership from the LSVOF Taskforce and the DEA. Chief-select Winterscheidt proposed dissolving SPD's internal narcotics bureau and transferring the senior investigator to the LSVOF Taskforce. While Captain Champaigne disagreed with this plan, Chief Alexander supported it. It should also be noted that leadership of the LSVOF taskforce requested my assignment to their taskforce several times before the NACU grant situation arose.

Beginning in approximately 2014, officers assigned to narcotics investigations were considered to be one assignment, regardless of their assigned taskforce. Prior to that, if an officer was assigned to the LSVOF Taskforce, and that position was eliminated, the officer assigned to the LSVOF Taskforce would return to patrol regardless of their seniority status compared to the other investigators. At the time, this created assignment uncertainty for Investigator Monte who was assigned to the LSVOF Taskforce. Then-Chief Charles Lagesse issued a directive to each of the narcotics investigators defining them as one assignment, regardless of work location. The directive stated the most junior narcotics investigator would be removed from their position in the event of a cutback. Chief Winterscheidt, Investigator Jim Olson, and Investigator Monte were assigned to narcotics at that time.

This directive guided Chief Winterscheidt in his decision to reassign Investigator Custer to patrol and me to the LSVOF Taskforce when NACU was dissolved in 2023. At the time, I was second in seniority to Investigator Monte. I now know through conversations with Chief Winterscheidt

that Captain Champaigne strongly disagreed with Chief Winterscheidt's decision. Captain Champaigne told Chief Winterscheidt that he believed the LSVOF taskforce assignment should've been posted for other officers to apply. Chief Winterscheidt recognized Captain Champaigne might not have been aware of Chief Lagesse's directive in the matter because he was not in a position that would've been made aware at the time. Despite becoming enlightened about the directive, Captain Champaigne insisted the position should've been posted for "optics." Chief Winterscheidt reminded Captain Champaigne that he could not discriminate against me because of my marital status, regardless of who I was married to, and this decision was guided by policy, contract, and law. To the best of my knowledge, that directive was never rescinded or replaced.

I am aware through conversations with Chief Winterscheidt that he decided to assign two officers to the LSVOF Taskforce and dissolve the internal SPD narcotics bureau for the following reasons:

- The LSVOF taskforce has jurisdictional authority to operate in Superior.
- The LSVOF taskforce has adequate staff assigned to the taskforce to conduct modern narcotics investigations, which have changed significantly over the years.
- The City of Duluth is designated as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). This designation provides resources for controlled-buy funds and overtime expenses that would otherwise be absorbed by the Superior Police Department with the termination of NACU.
- Two investigators rather than three were assigned to LSVOF because he believed the assignment of three investigators to the LSVOF taskforce would be excessive, and the third investigator position would be more useful in ICAC.

Captain Champaigne and Lieutenant Pope were very critical of this decision. I believe their obstinacy to this decision was the result of Lieutenant Pope's personal experience on the taskforce early in her career when she negligently discharged her firearm while executing a warrant. According to information from members of the LSVOF taskforce and others, then-Investigator Lear (now Pope) claimed her firearm discharged when she was trying to re-holster her weapon, but the physical evidence did not align with her claim. Duluth Deputy Chief Luckovsky was her partner at the time. He brought up concerns about her honesty, and she left the LSVOF taskforce soon afterward. Lieutenant Pope's relationship with the LSVOF taskforce and Deputy Chief Luckovsky in particular have been strained ever since. I do not have personal knowledge of this situation. These are just rumors I've heard over the years, but it would provide a plausible explanation for her lack of communication and cooperation with the LSVOF taskforce.

Chief Winterscheidt was sworn-in as the Chief of Police at the end of January, 2024. Coincidentally, this was contemporaneous with the end of the NACU grant and our internal scheduling bid sheet. Chief Winterscheidt directed the aforementioned changes shortly after being sworn-in as Chief to coincide with the end of the NACU grant and the start of the winter bid sheet.

This period encompassed pregnancies with my first and second child, as well as associated FMLA time. I was not assigned continuously to narcotics investigations during this time. Staffing shortages required me to work as a patrol officer occasionally.

### **The SPD Command Staff (2020 to 2024):**

The Superior Police Department's "Command Staff" was defined generally defined as the Chief of Police (Nicholas Alexander), Assistant Chief of Police (John Kiel), Patrol Captain (Paul Winterscheidt), Investigations Captain (Tom Champaigne), Patrol Lieutenant (Thor Trone), and Investigations Lieutenant (Michelle Pope). Through conversations with other officers, I am aware that this group of people, with the exception of Paul Winterscheidt, were a very close friend-group. From my personal observations, I've noticed Asst. Chief Kiel spent a considerable amount of time in Lt. Pope's office, and visa versa, even though he was not her direct supervisor. Tom Champaigne was often described as Lt. Pope's protector by other officers on the department because of rumors that he often covered-up her mistakes. I have no personal knowledge of this behavior. These are only rumors that I have heard. Nevertheless, I am aware that Asst. Chief Kiel was the best man in Lt. Trone's wedding, and Capt. Champaigne was close personal friends with Chief Alexander, often spending a considerable amount of off-duty time together. Capt. Champaigne also had a very close relationship to Capt. Jeff Harriman. This information is relevant to the current matter because I believe these relationships created a lack of objectivity and influenced the actions of my supervisors.

I am aware through conversations with Chief Winterscheidt that Asst. Chief Kiel rarely spoke with him while he was the patrol captain, despite Asst. Chief Kiel being then-Captain Winterscheidt's direct supervisor, while Asst. Chief Kiel spent a significant amount of time interacting with Lt. Trone (Captain Winterscheidt's direct report). Then-Captain Winterscheidt sometimes complained that he felt he was being setup to fail by Asst. Chief Kiel because Asst. Chief Kiel would not provide any direction or expectations to Captain Winterscheidt. This took place from mid-2020 to the beginning of 2024. I believe Asst. Chief Kiel did not like Captain Winterscheidt because he competed with his close friend, Lt. Trone, for the Patrol Captain position and was ultimately selected for the role over Lt. Trone.

One of Chief Winterscheidt's first tasks after being sworn in as the Chief of Police was the selection of new Patrol and Investigations Captains. I am aware through conversations with Chief Winterscheidt that shortly after Chief Winterscheidt's selection for the chief position, Asst. Chief Kiel told Chief Winterscheidt that he hoped Lt. Pope and Lt. Trone (his close friends) would apply for the captain positions. Asst. Chief Kiel told Chief Winterscheidt that he believed they "deserved" the positions. Asst. Chief Kiel went on to explain that he hoped his last year on the department would be a "fun" experience for Chief Winterscheidt and not a "big F-U to the department." According to Chief Winterscheidt, the statement by Asst. Chief Kiel was a clear indication that he would face retaliation from Asst. Chief Kiel if his friends were not selected for promotion. In the end, I believe Chief Winterscheidt was partially correct. Instead of retaliation against Chief Winterscheidt, the retaliation was directed against me (his wife). In fact, this

internal investigation was apparently launched within days of Jeff Harriman's selection to be the Investigations Captain position over Lt. Pope.

### **Standards and Expectations:**

Work hours for represented police officers in the City of Superior are defined by the Article 8, Section A, of the Local 27 union contract.

#### **Article 8 - HOURS**

A) For an employee regularly scheduled for 8 hour work days, a normal work week shall consist of 40 hours. For an employee regularly scheduled for 10 hour work days, the weekly scheduling pattern will be 5 work/4 off; 5 work/4 off; 6 work/4 off, with a normal work week consisting of 30 or 60 hours depending on the rotation. Shift hours are defined as follows: 8 hour shifts Day Afternoon Power Night 7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. 3:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. 11:00 p.m. - 7:00 a.m. 10 hour shifts 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. 2:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. 5:00 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. 10:00 p.m. - 8:00 a.m.

The work hours and expectations for narcotics investigators have remained consistent for the known past. Chief Winterscheidt inherited these standards from Chief Alexander, Chief Lagesse before him, and Chief Peters before him. Narcotics has always had a flexible schedule because of the nature of the work. Narcotics investigators are often required to act on information at the last minute and take after-hours phone calls from informants and other investigators, just for two examples. There are many more examples.

It is in the best interest of the City and the investigator to maintain a flexible schedule. This is how it was when Chief Winterscheidt was a narcotics investigator, and this is how it was explained to him by his senior narcotics investigation partner at the time, Jeff Harriman. Chief Winterscheidt did not set this standard. This standard has remained consistent as far back as I know, and it is the same standard narcotics investigators in other agencies adhere to. This is not something unique or new. It should be noted that any changes to that expectation are at the sole discretion of the Chief of Police. Subordinate supervisors do not have the contractual authority to make changes to vice/narcotics officer schedules, according to Article 8 of the working agreement. The working agreement also trumps any existing City policy.

According to the contract, only the Chief of Police has the contractual authority to change this arrangement, and Chief Winterscheidt ordered no such change. In fact, I am aware that Chief Winterscheidt asked the investigations division leadership to consider revising the flexible schedule expectations for all non-essential officers because detectives and other investigators would benefit from this flexibility as well. Chief Winterscheidt proposed this idea at a command staff meeting in March 2023. He also proposed providing equipment to detectives, so they could work from home during dangerous weather to improve safety. Chief Winterscheidt asked Captain Harriman to work with Lt. Pope to create a draft special order for consideration, but they

never completed the draft. Instead, Lt. Pope provided direction to non-essential staff that was not consistent with the Chief's direction when she had no contractual authority to do so.

Changes in policy or practice are communicated through a Special Order from the Chief of Police, directive from a division commander or above, or a memorandum from any supervisor. Special Orders supersede existing policy and are meant to make quick adjustments before a full review of the applicable policy can be conducted. Because special orders carry the weight of policy, the Chief of Police is the only member of the department authorized by Department policy to issue such an order. Directives are intended to clarify existing policy without superseding the policy. Directives may be issued by division commanders (captains) or above. Memorandums may be issued by any supervisor to memorialize a communication for present and future members of the department. Special orders, directives, and memorandums are maintained in the department's police and procedure RMS and have an employee acknowledgement process.

### **Accounting of Work Hours:**

I strongly disagree with any suggestion that I was dishonest about any aspect of my career, and I did not intentionally falsify any work hours. I simply followed the standard practice for the narcotics investigator position and the sometimes conflicting advice of my supervisors. I was apparently subjected to different standards than my male counterparts, including Investigator Monte, SHA Liaison Officer Patrick Deignan, and Detective Griff Coffman, who also enjoyed flexible work schedules. I was also held to a different standard than members of the command staff. The differences in those expectations became more severe after I became pregnant with my first child.

For example, Lt. Pope at one time told me I had to provide my schedule a month in advance, but Detective Coffman was allowed to provide his schedule on the Sunday before the start of his week, and Officer Deignan was allowed to change his schedule mid-week to help with childcare. These varied expectations were in place at the same time.

It has been common practice to allow changes to the time-keeping system to be made after-the-fact. Other officers and administrators have been allowed to do this for years. The Department currently uses PowerTime to record officer work hours, but the City's time-keeping/payroll system is TimeClockPlus (TCP). Officers do not enter their work hours into TCP. Rather, the Department's administrative assistant manually records all work hours recorded in PowerTime on paper sheets, which are then sent to the Finance Department for their entry into TCP on a bi-weekly basis. It is not uncommon for staff to update their schedules in PowerTime after the fact, and this usually does not create an issue because the actual timesheet into TCP is not made in real time.

Entering time-off after the fact is very common, especially for non-essential staff that do not count toward minimum patrol staffing levels. For example, according to PowerTime records, the

following is a list of detectives and supervisors who submitted time off requests after-the-fact. I have preserved these reports for future reference.

Detective Griff Coffman – 110 after-the-fact entries.

Detective Russ Milroy – 50 after-the-fact entries.

Detective Chris Woolery – 159 after-the-fact entries.

Detective Holmgren – 36 after-the-fact entries.

Detective Taavi Mattson – 19 after-the-fact entries.

Detective Kelsey Davis – 26 after-the-fact entries.

Lieutenant Thor Trone – 105 after-the-fact entries.

Lieutenant Michelle Pope – 129 after-the-fact entries.

Captain Jeff Harriman – 59 after-the-fact entries.

Former Captain Bill Lear – 212 after-the-fact entries.

Asst. Chief John Kiel – 101 after-the-fact entries.

During this time, I had 174 after-the-fact entries. It is important to note that I was not counseled for these entries or told this was an unacceptable practice.

It should be noted that former Captain Tom Champaigne's report was not available because his profile appears to have been **deleted** from PowerTime.

While I don't have them in time for this rebuttal, I plan to file an open records request for all key FOB logs pertaining to the aforementioned individuals. I am interested to see what those logs show, and I believe it may present an uncomfortable quagmire for my accusers. Will they be subjected to internal investigations and will their credibility be in question?

### **Supervisor Reaction to my [REDACTED]**

I informed my supervisors of my first [REDACTED] in approximately April 2022. Capt. Champaigne and Lt. Pope's reaction was to immediately go to Human Resources to force my removal from my narcotics assignment. Capt. Champaigne was very upfront with me about his actions. He literally told me that he went to Human Resources with Lt. Pope to find a way to force me onto light duty and remove me from my narcotics assignment because I was pregnant. When that failed (because it was illegal), they further restricted my flexible work schedule. It was around that time that Asst. Chief Kiel told me, while in the presence of other officers, that I should be forced to wear a "matron's skirt and sit at the front desk because they don't know what to do with me." He was referring to my new [REDACTED]. I was absolutely mortified by this demeaning and degrading comment in front of my coworkers. It is important to recognize that the police officers must trust each other with their lives. Asst. Chief Kiel's statements

undermined my hard-built reputation with my coworkers and made it difficult for me to be a trusted member of the department. This comment embarrassed me. It was hard enough to decide when to share my [REDACTED] with the department, for various reasons. Even more disturbingly, these actions made it clear they would come after my job with all tools at their disposal because they did not think a pregnant woman should be a narcotics investigator. It should be noted that I was the first pregnant police officer on the Superior Police Department in more than 20 years. I felt like a guinea pig, and penalized for being a working, expectant mother in the year of 2022.

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] leave, I returned to work in a light duty capacity [REDACTED]. It was immediately clear that Capt. Champaigne and Lt. Pope were still after me. After they learned that they could not overtly discriminate against me by removing me from my assignment and forcing me to a light-duty status while I was pregnant, it appears they decided to make my life as difficult as possible by assigning me to a light-duty assignment that had been used as a punishment tool in the past. I was assigned to the property room despite ample work that I could perform as a narcotics investigator while on light-duty. I requested to remain in my narcotics detail while I recovered from the birth of my child, but my request was denied by Lt. Pope.

One of my first days back to work from the birth of my first child, I believe the date was November 8th, 2022, Lt. Pope stormed into the police department record's bureau and started to yell at me in front of the record's staff. Lt. Pope said something similar to "aren't you supposed to be doing a training?" I had just returned to work and the front desk receptionists, who hadn't seen me in months, simply asked to see a photograph of my newborn. The record's staff were shocked with Lt. Pope's attitude and comments directed at me, as we discussed this in great detail after the fact.. I am certain they would testify to this. Officer Kelsey Davis was also present during this interaction and also felt the wrath of Lt. Pope.

It is interesting to note that I was allowed to wear leggings while I was pregnant, but after I was assigned to the property room, I was required to wear uniform pants which were obviously uncomfortable after the birth of my child, even though I had no contact with the public in the property room. This happened to be a brand new rule that was implemented upon my return to work. Officer Jennie Nelson wore jeans and tennis shoes to work, for years. Her assignment was the property room officer.

During one of Lt. Pope's "check ups" on me in the property room, she decided to address wardrobes with Officer Nelson and Officer Davis, directly in my presence. She asked them what sizes of clothing they needed and were going to now be required to wear a property room uniform. Lt. Pope however, made no attempt to have a conversation with me about what I was wearing, and did not ask to order me clothing, or provide me with any guidance for how she would like me to be dressed.

The next day, Capt. Champaigne emailed me the uniform policy (Superior Police Policy 1024 – Uniform Regulations), and said I was clearly not adhering to it. Why wasn't I informed of the new uniform standards by Lt. Pope when she was speaking directly to Officer Davis and Officer Nelson? Why was I sent the uniform policy instead, by a higher chain of command?

While on light duty, I was also prohibited from leaving the station during the workday in any city vehicle. I don't believe there was any legitimate purpose for these restrictions, and they were not equally applied to male staff who had been on light duty. For example:

My narcotics counterpart, Ron Custer, was able to remain in his narcotics assignment while on light duty.

Jeff Harriman was assigned to an investigation position while on light duty as a sergeant.

Officer Brian Davis was assigned to the detective bureau while on light-duty.

Detective Sean Holmgren was able to remain in his detective position while on light-duty.

Chief Winterscheidt, while a narcotics investigator, was allowed to remain in his assignment while on light duty. Later, as a sergeant, he was assigned to ICAC while on light duty. It is interesting to note that Chief Winterscheidt was allowed to carry a firearm, drive a city vehicle, and participate in warrant executions, despite similar light duty restrictions to my own.

Then-sergeant Bill Lear was assigned to work on a cold case while on light duty, despite not having investigations experience. This was near the same time that I was assigned to the property room. His sister, Lieutenant Pope, was responsible for assigning light duty assignments. May it be noted, Bill Lear showed up to his light duty assignment wearing jeans, clearly outside of dress code policies for his position. May it also be noted there were no narcotics investigators for the City of Superior, but a cold case took precedence over active, felony level drug offenses which were occurring daily in the community.

Former Chief Nick Alexander was on light duty for significant lengths of time while a sergeant, deputy chief, and while the chief of police. He was allowed to carry a firearm and leave the station while on light duty at the same time as me.

I find it interesting that the only two fully trained police officers assigned to the property room for light duty were women, along with Probationary Officer Seth Noll who was injured during his training at the police academy.

I am aware that property room assignments have been used as disciplinary measures in the past. I am aware that former Sergeant Kirchoff was "sentenced" to the property room for a period of time in response to a disciplinary infraction. After that incident, assignment to the property room was widely known as a potential disciplinary measure, especially by the veteran officers.

While working my light-duty assignment in the property room, Capt. Champaigne stopped down for a visit. I asked him when he thought I would be able to return to my narcotics assignment. He responded by saying if he had it his way, I wouldn't have been in narcotics at all. It should be noted that other narcotics investigators, who happened to be male and not a new mother, were allowed to remain in their narcotics investigator assignments (and detective assignments) while on light duty. They were allowed to operate a city vehicle, leave the station while on light duty, and carry a firearm.

Officers on the police department are allotted on-duty work out benefits. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I put in a submission in Planit Police (our time keeping system) to use my on-duty physical fitness time at the end of my shift. While using the gym, I had stepped into the locker room and used the bathroom, when I came back into the gym, I saw Capt. Champaigne poking his head in the gym from the men's locker room. I literally looked at Detective Milroy who was walking on the treadmill (also using his on-duty work out privileges) and asked if Capt. Champaigne had seriously come into the gym to check on me. This was just many unexpected "check ins" that I had experienced while on light duty from the birth of my child.

The next day, Capt. Champaigne called me and accused me of not working out on duty, and not being at the department gym. I told Capt. Champaigne that I was not surprised he called me, because I witnessed him checking up on me yesterday (while working out on duty) and was able to describe what he was wearing and even what he was carrying. Detective Milroy was my witness to me working out on duty. When I challenged Capt. Champaigne on his accusations of me not working out on duty, in the department gym, he quickly changed the subject. Capt. Champaigne then told me he didn't even know that Detectives or Investigators were allowed to use the on duty work out privileges.

I approached Chief Alexander about the bizarre behavior I was experiencing from Lt. Pope and Capt. Champaigne. I also brought to his attention that I was concerned about being exposed to drugs and hazardous chemicals in the property room while I was still nursing my baby. This was something Officer Nelson told me to be aware of while I was nursing. She said to be careful as there were drugs and other hazardous materials in the property room that we were required to handle. Officer Nelson was aware of fentanyl in particular, that could get onto my clothing and into my breastmilk/lactation equipment. Chief Alexander suggested I communicate those concerns to my healthcare provider and see if they would be able to restrict me from duties in the property room. Then union-president Charlie Mahlen was present during my conversation with Chief Alexander. This was ultimately the route I took. Given the apparently illegal attempts to destroy my career already made by Capt. Champaigne and Lt. Pope, I was concerned to take my complaints further for fear of retaliation. You will see in the following pages that my fears were reasonable. I even told Chief Alexander that I feared retaliation from my supervisors, and I did not want to rock the boat. I told Chief Alexander that I also have no idea why I was suddenly being treated this way by Lt. Pope. The only thing that had changed was the fact that I had a baby, and had taken FLMA.

### **My First Return to Full-Duty from FMLA:**

I [REDACTED]. I returned to my investigator assignment in narcotics with my partner, Ron Custer. I decided to push forward, even with the differential treatment compared to my male counterparts. As a female officer in a male-dominated profession, I've learned it is important not to make

waves. The comments made by Capt. Champaigne and Asst. Chief Kiel were a clear warning to me of what the consequences of speaking up for my rights would be.

[REDACTED]. I requested lactation facilities. I was provided with a shower stall in a bathroom with a curtain and an extension cord across the floor. There was little to no privacy. While using this “lactation space,” male officers sometimes entered the women’s bathroom because they stored their honor guard equipment in the women’s locker room. Male custodial staff also sometimes entered the women’s locker room while I was pumping. I knew complaining would earn retaliation, but it was clear they were trying to make things hard on me for pumping breast milk.

After my conversation with Chief Alexander, Lt. Pope called me into her office. Lt. Pope told me she found it awfully suspicious that I was not allowed to be around drugs, but I was able to complete my computer work as a narcotics officer. Lt. Pope stared at me, and asked me to explain my medical note. I asked Lt. Pope if she was requiring me to share my private and protected medical information along with the opinions of my doctor. Lt. Pope immediately back pedaled, dropped a pen she was holding under her desk, and told me she was not asking that. I repeated exactly what Lt. Pope had just asked me, and told her something to the effect of “that is exactly what you just asked of me”. I told Lt. Pope I was also following a directive of Chief Alexander. Lt. Pope was obviously not expecting me to question her about digging into my private and protected medical information. Lt. Pope then said something to the effect of “I think we may have just gotten off on the wrong start”. It was obvious Lt. Pope was aware of her adversarial relationship toward me based on this comment.

When I continued to speak to Lt. Pope about my plans to continue pumping my breastmilk at work, she discussed her own return to work from having her daughter. I asked Lt. Pope what she did when she returned to work after having her daughter. Lt. Pope told me she simply couldn’t pump/breastfeed after her child was born because she was too busy getting her work done as an events coordinator for Barker’s Island Inn. Message received – I understood Lieutenant Pope did not approve of my lactation needs and that work should be a priority over expressing my breastmilk.

I approached Chief Alexander with my lactation facility concerns. I was accompanied by then-union president Charlie Mahlen. He told me he would get back to me. He eventually told me I could go to a space in the public health nurse’s office. This space was not always accessible during my work hours, and it was not reliably available because I would need to sign up every time I needed to use the space. This space was also not near my work area. The bathroom was the only real option I had to not take up too much time in my day. I attempted to plan my pumping breaks when I did not have to be out in the field when I could.

It should be noted that then-Capt. Winterscheidt repeatedly warned Chief Alexander, Capt. Champaigne, and Lt. Pope that the space was not a suitable lactation space and did not meet the requirements of federal law. Still, nothing was done. It should also be noted that Chief Winterscheidt highlighted this situation as a key priority he would correct as the new chief of police in his interview and selection process. Chief Winterscheidt was able to create suitable

lactation space within a short time of his appointment. Interestingly enough, Lt. Pope requested to be on the lactation space committee. I learned during the implementation of this facility, that Lt. Pope was argumentative with Officer Phillips about the facility being equipped with a sink. Lt. Pope did not feel the facility needed or should be equipped with a sink. This is another federal law requirement.

### **Weekly Meetings and Performance Reviews:**

During my time as a narcotics investigator attached to the NACU taskforce, Officer Custer and I had regular meetings with Lt. Pope and sometimes with Capt. Champaigne. No performance concerns were mentioned during those meetings. It wasn't until September of 2023 that Officer Custer and I received a poor performance appraisal from Lt. Pope and Capt. Champaigne. Interestingly, Lt. Pope and Capt. Champaigne did not seem to think this "poor performance review" was important enough to be documented until three months later (December of 2023), when rumors of my second [REDACTED] began to circulate in the department. It was also documented at the same time Chief Winterscheidt stated that I would be starting with the LSVOTF.

While rumors about my private medical information were being circulated by Capt. Champaigne and Lt. Pope, I was reluctant to formally announce my [REDACTED] for fear of additional retaliation. They admitted they went after my job once for being a pregnant woman, and I assumed they would do it again. I received information from Jennie Nelson that Capt. Champaigne and his wife were discussing rumors of my [REDACTED] at the 2023 SPD Christmas party. Additionally, Nikki Kalan told me Lt. Pope asked her about my rumored [REDACTED] while they were both on duty, at the Superior Police Department. Coincidentally, after rumors of my [REDACTED] seemed to be a hot topic of discussion amongst the command staff at the Christmas party, the command staff attended a party with Daniel Hardman, at Chief Alexanders's house. Daniel Hardman was the "neutral third party investigator" selected for my internal investigation.

### **Retaliation Returns:**

As my second [REDACTED] progressed, I made the decision to announce my LSVOTF supervisors of my [REDACTED] I feel Captain Champaigne and Lieutenant Pope were thwarted in their efforts to violate my civil rights during my first [REDACTED] and it was now obvious they set out to make my new assignment as uncomfortable for me as possible. It was during this time that the NACU grant went away, and Chief Winterscheidt made the aforementioned changes to the department's narcotics assignments. Being assigned to the LSVOF taskforce meant I would have a local taskforce supervisor, and it would be more difficult for Capt. Champaigne and Lt. Pope to continue retaliating against me.

It was also at this time that Chief Winterscheidt did not select Lt. Pope to be the next investigations captain, and Lt. Trone was not selected to be the next patrol captain. Things immediately became very uncomfortable for me. I received conflicting directions from Lt. Pope

and the new investigations division commander, Capt. Harriman. May it be noted that my investigative partner, Tim Monte, received none of these requirements for his previous 15 years on the task force, and after three months of being assigned to the LSVOTF, Capt. Harriman and Lt. Pope remembered they should probably tell Investigator Monte to adhere to their new “directives”. This occurred only after Investigative Monte asked Capt. Harriman for clarification, as Investigator Monte saw what Capt. Harriman and Lt. Pope were giving me conflicting directives.

I was told by Capt. Harriman via email that I was simply expected to submit overtime when I worked in excess of 40 hours in a week, and I was supposed to submit time off when I worked less than 40 hours in a week. This is an example of the schedule flexibility enjoyed by narcotics investigators because of the unpredictable nature of the assignment. This is also an example of a mutually agreeable schedule deviation, as outlined in Article 8 of the working agreement. This arrangement is beneficial to the City because the working agreement otherwise requires the compensation at the overtime rate for any hours worked outside of the employee’s normally scheduled hours. This would be far more costly to the city than the long-held, mutually agreed practice that has been in place for as long as any of the other investigators can remember. I would also remind the reader that the Chief of Police is the only person who can make that change, and that authority cannot be delegated according to Section 8 of the working agreement.

Then things escalated, unannounced to me. Capt. Champaigne admitted to placing a GPS tracking device on my assigned police vehicle without my knowledge or consent on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024, mere days after his friend was not selected to be the investigations captain. It is my belief that Capt. Champaigne may have placed the Douglas County Sheriff’s Department’s tracker on my narcotics vehicle prior to February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024. It is also my belief that Capt. Champaigne went to extreme measures to monitor me, because he believed he would have no consequences due to his upcoming retirement.

Capt. Champaigne told Mr. Hardman that he had concerns about my time accountability prior to installing the tracking device. Interestingly enough, none of my supervisors had the decency to speak to me about this concern, clarify my working hours, or simply make me aware of exactly what they wanted of me. Capt. Champaigne later told a DEA background investigator he did not ask me about his concerns because he did not want it to be a small problem. He wanted to wait until it was a bigger deal. Instead, Capt. Champaigne continued to covertly surveil my movements using an electronic tracking device. The device was installed without a warrant, expressly to track my movements as a person, not the movements of a department-owned vehicle. Given the circumstances leading up to these actions, I believe this tracker was placed on my vehicle in order to further retaliation against me for my [REDACTED] and use of FMLA time. My home and primary work assignment were in the State of Minnesota. If these concerns are true, they could represent a felony violation of Minnesota Statute 626A.35. Both City Attorney Frog Prell and Mayor Jim Paine denied giving authorization to place a tracking device on my assigned vehicle without consent, and no such authorization was given by Chief Winterscheidt. The covert application of GPS tracking devices on police vehicles is not authorized in Department policy or the working agreement. Capt. Champaigne does not have the authority to

authorize the covert placement of a GPS tracking device on a department vehicle. It is clear, and I believe a jury would agree, that the extraordinary measures pursued by Capt. Champaigne and Lt. Pope represent a clear violation of my 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights and were pursued in retaliation for my [REDACTED] and use of FMLA time. Why would a supervisor watch perceived policy violations day after day and not bring it to the employee's attention?

According to the National Labor Relations Act, employers must bargain in good faith over changes to working conditions, which include surveillance and monitoring. Implementing covert GPS tracking without negotiation could likely be considered an unfair labor practice.

Surveillance (including GPS tracking) is generally recognized as a mandatory subject of bargaining when it impacts employee privacy and discipline. I am aware that labor arbitrators have ruled in favor of unions when employers unilaterally introduced surveillance tools (including GPS) without bargaining. Covert GPS tracking of employees is not addressed in SPD policy or contract.

It is unclear where the GPS device was installed. Wisconsin Statute 940.315 provides legal restrictions for the installation of GPS tracking devices without consent. While the statute provides an exception for the installation of tracking devices on company owned vehicles by employers, Capt. Champaigne did not have that authority as a police captain. While Capt. Champaigne was a supervisor in the agency, he had no more authority to place a covert tracker than any other supervisor in the department. May it be noted, Capt. Champaigne would have accessed the Douglas County Sheriff's Department GPS tracker, and also the login and subscription information to track me. I believe this is a misuse of public funds and equipment. This will obviously require me to look into the Douglas County Sheriff's Department's involvement in this violation.

### **Standards for Other Officers, Investigators and Detectives:**

Superior Police Officers are not afforded a scheduled lunch break. This applies to supervisors, officers, and investigators/detectives. Most members of the administration and detectives are generally entered into the schedule as "Days." Article 8 of the working agreement defines the day shift as 7am to 3pm, Monday through Friday. Nevertheless, this is not the common schedule worked by most members of the administration or detectives and investigators. For example, it is common for Captain Harriman to arrive to work in shorts and a t-shirt sometime between 830am and 9am, despite his schedule indicating he works "Days." For approximately two weeks after my internal investigation was formally launched, he was careful about updating his hours according to his actual hours of work. That fell off, and he is back to his old habits. The Patrol Division commander, Capt. William Lear, would regularly deviate from his schedule by hours and not update his timesheet.

All members of the department who are not assigned a designated lunch break are free to take lunch whenever they wish, as long as they are still available to perform their duties if needed. There is no restriction on where lunch can be taken or its duration. It must simply be reasonable and within jurisdictional boundaries. Officers are not required to eat while taking a lunch break.

In fact, it is authorized and commonplace for staff to exercise during their lunch break. I am also aware that it is common for detectives to sometimes take lunches in excess of an hour in neighboring jurisdictions. I am aware it was common for Jeff Harriman to have lunch at Buffalo Wild Wings in Duluth while he was an investigator, especially during March Madness. It should be understood that flexibility in our lunches is a necessity because of the unpredictable nature of our job. While staff are sometimes able to take a longer than normal lunch, it is far more common for lunch to be cut short.

It is common for officers to stop home for lunch and at other times during their shifts. It is common for patrol officers to stop home in the evening to tuck their kids into bed, and this has never been an issue... until I became pregnant and had a baby...

My house is in Duluth. My assignment is in Duluth. There is no policy that says I cannot stop home during my shift. Doing so is not an indication that I am not working. It must simply be reasonable. If Capt. Champaigne, Lt. Pope, or Capt. Harriman, believed my liberties were unreasonable, he should've brought that to my attention immediately. In fact, failure to take immediate corrective action is a violation of department policy (Superior Police Policy 320 – Personnel Complaints). My behaviors were in line with the behaviors of members of the command staff and other detectives, and there was no reasonable expectation that I would be required to update the timesheet for such deviations.

Narcotics investigators have always had a flexible start time. This has not changed. It would be completely reasonable to go in late in the morning, if I took a call from an informant overnight, for example. This is the standard for every other narcotics investigator I work with. Capt. Champaigne's assertions that I was expected to update the schedule for day-to-day deviations are not consistent with years of precedent, and they do not reflect the behaviors of members of the command staff, nor was this the expectation they had for me before my pregnancies.

The internal investigation report cited FOB-swipe times and purported them to be evidence of tardiness when those swipes occurred after 8am or perhaps were absent for the entire day. I would've expected experienced investigators to recognize the significant limitations of that evidence and follow more logical conclusions, but it seems their objectivity was clouded by their zeal to make a 'big deal' out of their perceived infractions. There are many explanations for why a person's FOB-swipe time may be later than expected. Perhaps they entered with someone else, and the other person used their FOB? Perhaps the employee made a stop along the way or drove by a location to see if a suspect vehicle was present? Those are both very common occurrences. Had Capt. Champaigne immediately addressed his concerns with me, perhaps I could've recalled what I did on a specific day. Instead, I wasn't asked about their perceived infractions until more than seven months later, despite numerous in-person meetings with Lt. Pope and Capt. Harriman during those months. Mayor Paine noted in his documentation of counsel, that I did not provide sufficient testimony to refute the allegations. I would respectfully point out that it is the City's responsibility to prove the allegations. It is not my responsibility to prove my innocence. The City cannot simply wait until my memory is clouded by time to ask me about a perceived infraction and then claim that I did not provide sufficient defense. It was also obvious to me that members of the police department administration were bringing claims of dishonesty in my role

as a police officer. I certainly was not going to even attempt to guess what I was doing during these times and then have my responses viewed as a “lie”. During a formal meeting with Human Resources and Assistant Chief Kiel, Human Resources Director Janigo, stated “of course she couldn’t remember what she was doing on a certain date approximately 7 months ago”. If this was reasonable, why is it unreasonable for me to truthfully say I don’t remember what I was doing during a specific hour, 7 months prior?

Another significant limitation to their logic was the absence of exit time information. No attempt was made to ascertain when I exited the building or for what purpose. They did not consider times I FOB’d into the building on the weekends. Narcotics investigators do not spend all day at their desks. It is common to come and go multiple times in a day. There is no mention of when I left on a given day relative to when I arrived. The investigation report claims to show I started work at a given time, and it claims those times represent shorted hours, but end times are not recorded. The logic doesn’t follow, and a qualified investigator should’ve figured that out immediately. Unfortunately, facts didn’t matter in this case. The only imperative was using this as a tool to end my career when they already tried and failed to do it through other means.

### **Selection of the “Neutral” Investigator and a Biased Investigation:**

According to the internal investigation documentation, the principal investigator, Daniel D. Hardman, was contacted by Asst. Chief John Kiel and asked about his background and experience. His CV was submitted to the Superior Human Resource Department and the City Attorney’s Office. He was eventually selected to conduct the internal investigation because of his expertise and perceived neutrality in the matter. Sounds clean and tidy, right? Unfortunately, the internal investigation report willfully omits facts that are very relevant to his ability to conduct a neutral, unbiased investigation.

Mr. Hardman is the former Chief of Police for the Lake Delton Police Department in central Wisconsin. He is also a close, personal friend of Nick Alexander (who has claimed to be close friends of Tom Champaigne, John Kiel and Jeff Harriman). I am aware they have spent time at each other’s houses. I am aware that Mr. Hardman, Tom Champaigne, Frog Prell, and other members of the command staff, celebrated with Nick Alexander at his personal retirement party at his home. Personal observations of the event described their interactions as chummy.

Based on the pattern of targeted retaliation and their demonstrated zeal to take away my career, it is no surprise that they picked an ally to conduct the supposedly neutral investigation. When I asked Asst. Chief Kiel who was the investigator they had selected, he lied straight to my face in the presence of Capt. Harriman. Asst. Chief Kiel stated, “I don’t know, Mikayla. I believe it is a retired chief of police from the Wisconsin Dells area.” It is clear Mr. Hardman was suggested for the role because of his personal relationship with the accusers in this case. I would be curious to know if the extent of his relationship was disclosed to the City of Superior Human Resources Department or the City Attorney’s Office prior to his selection. It would be bad enough if their relationship was not disclosed by Asst. Chief Kiel. It would be far worse if the relationship was known and they proceeded forward with him anyways. Given City Attorney

Frog Prell was recently having drinks with Mr. Hardman at Chief Alexander's retirement party, I am deeply concerned the latter may be true. I do have some concerns that the selection of Mr. Hardman could represent a Private Interest in Public Contracts violation pursuant to Wisconsin Statute 946.13.

The City of Superior ended up paying Mr. Hardman (close personal friend of members of the administration) approximately \$15,000 to conduct an "unbiased" internal investigation he was not actually qualified to perform. Mr. Hardman conducted an investigation that was far from neutral or fair. My interview with Mr. Hardman was shockingly adversarial. He used demeaning and mocking language, offered leading questions, and tried to set traps for me, obviously hoping to catch me in a mistaken recollection that he could use to accuse me of lying. He also said there was no way I could perform my duties as a pregnant woman, and toward the end of my [REDACTED] couldn't have been out in the field. This was completely untrue. Audio recordings of this interview are available.

Mr. Hardman interviewed witnesses he believed would provide inculpatory information, and he purposely avoided interviewing witnesses that might provide exculpatory information. One of the central questions in this investigation is whether I worked my hours and recorded my time according to the expected standards. I suggested that to Mr. Hardman that he interview Chief Winterscheidt regarding department expectations, practice, and policy. It seems like Chief Winterscheidt would be an important witness in the matter and be able to provide critical context to the allegations. Mr. Hardman simply replied mockingly and never made any attempt to interview Chief Winterscheidt.

In the section titled **Interview with retired Captain Tom Champaigne**, on page 3 of the internal investigation report, Mr. Hardman wrote Captain Champaigne explained "detectives and investigators have the option of working a flexible schedule if they work 40 hours and keep their supervisor informed of their schedule." Captain Champaigne claimed there is a "regular expectation that you, the employee communicate your schedule to your direct supervisor at the beginning of each week." That statement is untruthful. There is actually a wide range of "regular expectations" for various members of the department, depending on who the person is. For example, I am aware that a number of detectives are not held to this standard. I was once given direction that I was supposed to provide a month's notice, but other people were held to a different standard, sometimes weekly. Sometimes daily. I don't make the claim that this is an untruthful statement lightly, but Captain Champaigne should've known this, and he instead provided untruthful information that painted his case in the most positive light.

According to Mr. Hardman's report, Capt. Champaigne stated I had been previously counseled about the requirement of providing my schedule to my SPD supervisor on a weekly basis, and this was a continuous issue. This was an untruthful statement by Capt. Champaigne. I do not recall ever receiving "counseling" for this issue, and there is no such entry for counseling in my employee record. I sometimes received emails from Lt. Pope asking what I planned to work during a given week, which I replied to. It was also common for Lieutenant Pope to forget to update my schedule according to the information I provided. Capt. Champaigne's claim that I

was “counseled” and this was a “continuous issue” is a bold-faced lie that cannot be excused by interpretation.

Based on the previous two paragraphs, the third paragraph of Capt. Champaigne’s interview also becomes suspect. Capt. Champaigne said he decided to swing by my residence because of the concerns listed in the first two paragraphs. It follows that if the first two paragraphs were untruthful, the reason for his surveillance was not what he claimed in his interview with Mr. Hardman.

In the second paragraph of page 4 of the internal investigation report, Mr. Hardman wrote that Capt. Champaigne said he contacted former LVSOFTaskforce supervisor Lt. Chad Nagorski, and Lt. Nagorski said they do not allow taskforce members to work remotely. I spoke with Lt. Nagorski. He said while he does not recall every single conversation he has had with Captain Champaigne, he does not ever recall making a blanket statement to that effect, and he said he commonly allowed taskforce investigators to work from home. This statement by Captain Champaigne is clearly untruthful and bears directly on the key tenets of this case.

Captain Champaigne also failed to mention that he worked a 4 day, 10-hour per day schedule, and he worked every Friday from home, and he was off every Monday. Captain Champaigne maintained that schedule until his retirement. Captain Champaigne was a running joke at the department because of his lack of time accountability. Despite his schedule, his timesheet record indicated he worked “Days.” I am aware of multiple occasions when Assistant Chief Kiel, Lieutenant Trone, and Lieutenant Pope left work to attend to doctor’s appointments, run errands for their father, or because they were busy fighting a fire for their other job, and they were not required update their timesheet or use paid time off. I have evidence of these occasions readily available.

I remember Officer Nelson contacting Capt. Champaigne via phone in my presence. Capt. Champaigne was in the schedule. Officer Nelson had Capt. Champaigne on speaker phone. Officer Nelson asked Capt. Champaigne if he was working, to which he replied “why, who’s asking” and chuckled. It sounded like Capt. Champaigne was also driving in a vehicle, not “working from home”.

I should note that the three days they claimed I stole were actually supposed to be converted to paid leave by Captain Harriman, but he forgot to do it. He then cited these hours as an example of my inaccurate timekeeping to the DEA background investigator. When I became aware of Captain Harriman’s error, I contacted him and reminded him of the request. He recalled my request and apologized. Incredibly but not surprisingly, he forgot to enter the hours again! In fact, upon completion of this internal investigation, those hours were still not deducted from my time bank despite multiple reminders to my supervisors. The resolution of my discipline did not even require me to have those hours deducted from my vacation. Nevertheless, those hours should have been deducted, and I allowed those hours to expire unused because they were **STILL NOT CORRECTED!**

Mr. Hardman failed to include exculpatory information from his interviews with LSVOF taskforce, including statements from them indicating I was outperforming other members of the

taskforce, and that they had no concerns about my work hours or performance. The LSVOF taskforce supervisor, Sgt. Rod Wilson mentioned to me that their interview with Mr. Hardman was “oddly adversarial.” He said Mr. Hardman seemed upset that he was not providing the answers Mr. Hardman wanted to hear, despite his leading questions. He said Mr. Hardman was incredibly unprofessional, failed to record the interview, and took very few notes. Sgt. Wilson said he thought it was weird that Captain Harriman accompanied Mr. Hardman for the interview, given Mr. Hardman was supposed to represent a neutral investigation. Sgt. Wilson also knew that Capt. Harriman was involved in collecting other information regarding my internal investigation.

Mr. Hardman’s language in the report is clearly intended to paint a picture that Chief Winterscheidt pulled strings to get a position for me on the Duluth Taskforce. It should be noted that conversations about these decisions take place at ranks much higher than a taskforce sergeant.

I provided Sgt. Wilson with the internal investigation report. Sgt. Wilson pointed to several specific examples in the report that were deceptive. Sgt. Wilson specifically told Mr. Hardman I was outperforming other investigators on the taskforce. Instead of including that information, Mr. Hardman said the LSVOF taskforce appreciated my contribution because they were short-staffed, implying they wanted me to be there out of desperation. On that note, the report fails to mention that there weren’t enough spots for me to immediately have a desk, and they had to make changes to accommodate me. Hardly what one would expect from a desperately short-staffed taskforce.

Mr. Hardman’s report said Sgt. Wilson received a call from Captain Champaigne (1<sup>st</sup> paragraph on page 7 of the report) reminding him of the requirements of the Superior Police Department, that employees are required to keep their assigned Superior Police Department supervisors aware of what hours they are working and generally should send a copy of their weeks’ schedule to at the beginning of their work week. Sergeant Wilson said that paragraph was inaccurate, and it was Jeff Harriman who called – not Tom Champaigne.

Mr. Hardman’s report indicated Sgt. Wilson agreed that an investigator could not pull garbage or conduct surveillance in a matter of 30 minutes. Sgt. Wilson said he did not agree with that statement, and the statement that he agreed is not truthful. I can assure you 30 minutes is more than enough time to pull a bag of garbage or drive by a house or two to see if a drug dealer is back in town. This was yet another example of Mr. Hardman’s deceptive report. In this case, it seemed to be a lie.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Hardman was placed on administrative leave while he was the Chief of the Lake Delton Police Department, after he was accused of demeaning and humiliating his EMS personnel, and the local union accused him of decimating morale through gender, sexual orientation, and religious discrimination claims. Mr. Hardman was eventually reinstated by the local Police and Fire Commission.

Another example of Mr. Hardman’s deceptive claims is that the LVSOF taskforce does not allow members to work from home. That is a false statement, and it bears heavily on their case against

me. LVSOE taskforce sergeants Rod Wilson and Ryan Taggart said it was perfectly acceptable for investigators to work from home. The same was true for SPD employees. While I was on [REDACTED] leave for my first child, Lieutenant Pope gave me a laptop computer and told me I could work from home on an active narcotics case instead of using my FMLA time. These examples clearly illustrate that working from home is not only authorized, but it was actively facilitated by Lieutenant Pope and other supervisors. Captain Champaigne and Chief Alexander regularly worked from home. It is important to recognize that “working from home” generally does not mean setting up shop in my house and spending the day typing a report. It often means taking multiple phone calls from informants or other investigators when I am at home. It might mean checking GPS trackers or surveillance cameras. In one case, Sgt. Taggart authorized me to work from home on a particularly snowy day when my assigned take-home car was unable to drive on the roads. My instructions were to review surveillance footage, which I did.

I suggested to Mr. Hardman that he interview former LVSOE Sgt. Taggart because he could provide additional information. I believe Sgt. Taggart would be able to provide exculpatory information critical to this investigation. Unfortunately, Mr. Hardman did not interview Sgt. Taggart, and he concluded his information was not relevant because he was “not in the office over half the time in question.” He also said the most relevant issue is that Sgt. Taggart did not have the authority to grant my time off or approve deviation of my approved schedule. I believe Sgt. Taggart’s testimony is essential to my case because his testimony could provide some context for the inconsistency of scheduling expectations from my supervisors. He could also shed some light on the past practices and expectations in the unit. .

In the section labeled **Follow up with Captain Harriman** on page 25 of the internal investigation report, Mr. Hardman writes that my answers did not make sense to him. He said I stated that I “took days off consecutive,” but he claims that is not what the record shows, and he implies this is an example of deception. I recalled submitting my vacation time in two-day chunks as I neared the birth of my child. I intended to work as long as possible until I gave birth, but predicting an exact birthdate is not an exact science. When my baby came along, it was a chaotic time, as one might imagine. The timesheet was not at the top of my list of worries as I was laying in the hospital. After I returned home, I received a phone call from Captain Harriman asking how I wanted to take the time and whether I had worked hours on several other days that I was listed in the schedule. While I had actually performed some work on those days, I told him to mark me off with banked time rather than trying to recall what I had performed on those days. Ultimately, Captain Harriman forgot to update my schedule anyway.

Mr. Hardman wrote Captain Harriman pointed out that it would be impossible for me to make many calls to informants because I had only four active informants signed up. I would argue this is a false conclusion. Captain Harriman also said I only logged 12 calls in five months. I believe this statement is intentionally misleading and meant to paint a distorted picture of my workload to support a flawed and biased investigation. They failed to even attempt to find where my narrative reports were kept in the Duluth Police Record’s keeping system. I also have numerous case files and reports that are not kept in a police department report database for privacy reasons and on-going investigations.

I am certainly not suggesting that officers should be allowed to break rules because their supervisor breaks the rules. These examples are merely meant to illustrate the inconsistent expectations of timesheet accounting.

I would point out that City Human Resource Policy on “insubordination” (Human Resource Policy 1602) suggests the supervisor take into account aggravating behaviors of the supervisor that contributed to the incident. In this case, there was a clear pattern of harassment and discrimination from my supervisors beginning when I became pregnant with my first child. They systematically engaged in efforts to remove me from my position. When that didn’t work, they tried to make my working conditions unbearable. When that still didn’t work, they became desperate and launched this “internal investigation” as a last-ditch effort to ruin my career. Captain Champaigne covertly placed a GPS tracking device on my vehicle without the authority to do so, violating my 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights. He did so within weeks of his retirement I believe because he thought he could get away with it, and there would be no consequences. Captain Champaigne is a knowledgeable and experienced investigator. It would be difficult for him to claim ignorance. This can only mean he engaged in this violation of my 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment rights with willful disregard of the law.

#### **Hardman’s Interview with Investigator Monte:**

Mr. Hardman began his narrative by painting a picture that Investigator Monte was somehow intimidated by my marriage to Chief Winterscheidt. That is a highly deceptive assertion. Mr. Hardman wrote, “After clarifying the issues, he agreed to answer my questions.” Mr. Hardman doesn’t mention what “issues” were clarified. Investigator Monte mentioned to me that Mr. Hardman was trying very hard to get him to say I was late for work and somehow abusing our on-duty workout time order (Special Order 24-01).

#### **Mr. Hardman’s Conclusions:**

Mr. Hardman claimed I was being deceptive in my statements because I could not recall otherwise mundane events or my daily activities months prior, after the birth of my child. Mr. Hardman should know that memories tend to diminish over time. Had these questions been asked soon after the alleged violation I would’ve likely been able to recall details with more clarity. I brought up this exact point during my interview with Mr. Hardman. Mr. Hardman contradicts himself in the reports. In one part of the report, he claims remote work was not authorized. In the conclusion he states that remote work must be authorized in advance. Mr. Hardman claims only 12 calls with informants were logged, suggesting that I only received 12 phone calls from informants. This is laughable. We don’t log every call from an informant. I assume he is referring to intelligence reports. Not every call with an informant generates an intelligence report.

Mr. Hardman’s conclusion that I did not work at least a 40-hour week based on the evidence he cites does not follow logically. He bases his conclusions on my inability to prove my own

innocence rather than his ability to prove my guilt. While I am not required to prove my innocence in the first place, it becomes increasingly difficult to provide an accurate account of each day's activities months later.

Given Mr. Hardman's obvious attempts to misrepresent the statements of witnesses who provided exculpatory information, I can only imagine the conspiratorial lengths he went to in his interviews with Captain Champaigne, Lieutenant Pope, and Captain Harriman. I believe Captain Champaigne clearly provided an untruthful statement in this internal investigation. Mr. Hardman was hardly the neutral investigator he claimed to be. His relationship with my accusers, the inflammatory and sensational language in the report intended to tarnish the reputation of Chief Winterscheidt, and his unprofessional investigative efforts clearly demonstrate his bias. Internal investigations of misconduct are not supposed to be adversarial investigations. They are simply fact-finding exercises intended to determine what happened with the utmost clarity. When an investigator is driven by an agenda to find one answer or another, it is not difficult for confirmation bias to occur. This is investigations 101. Apparently Mr. Hardman and the other members of the command staff missed that class.

### **Resolution of Internal Investigation:**

When I was made aware of this internal investigation, I was told Asst. Chief Kiel would take the place of the Chief of Police in determining the outcome of the investigation and imposing discipline, if appropriate. I was placed on administrative leave and had my gun, badge, ID card, and keys taken away from me. Additionally, I was prohibited from visiting the entire Douglas County Government Center. According to Superior Police Department Policy 1010 – Personnel Complaints (1010.8 – Administrative Leave), administrative leave may be used when the complaint of misconduct is of a serious nature, or when circumstances indicate that allowing the accused to continue to work would adversely affect the mission of the Department. Termination was not a likely outcome in this case. I did not have any previous disciplinary history, and I was allowed to continue in my role for months before being placed on administrative leave. Further, taking my firearm and badge is not a mandatory extension of administrative leave, and there was no reason to do so. Banning me from the Government Center clearly served no legitimate purpose and was clearly meant to be punitive.

I should point out that other male officers facing more severe discipline than me were not placed on administrative leave during the past several years. I was clearly treated differently, and I believe it was because of their desire to embarrass me and tarnish my reputation as a police officer.

I found it appalling that Assistant Chief Kiel would be the one to determine my fate, given all the circumstances surrounding this investigation. He provided the name of a clearly biased investigator to Human Resources. He made derogatory statements about my [REDACTED] and status as a police officer in the presence of other staff (remember the matron's skirt comment?), and he clearly had an axe to grind with Chief Winterscheidt because Chief Winterscheidt did not promote his friends. Perhaps this was the "Big F-U to the Department" he was talking about.

If the command staff considered my alleged violations to be severe, I would ask why they allowed them to continue for months without intervention. If the violations were so severe that I had to be placed on immediate administrative leave, why was I allowed to continue my behaviors for months without intervention? Captain Champaign summed it up in his statement to the DEA background investigator – He wanted to build a robust case, not just a “couple mistakes.” He wanted to lay a trap. I often joked with my husband during this time that it felt like they placed a tracker on my car. It was just a feeling that I had. My husband told me that would be completely unacceptable and not allowed because it would undermine trust between officers and administration and it would be illegal. I guess we were both correct in our assessments. I should note that my concerns about a tracker did not cause me to change any behavior because I was under the impression that I was performing according to standard.

I remained on administrative leave for more than two months. I was returned to work after I finally filed a formal grievance in the matter. In our oral discussion phase of the grievance process, HR Director Janigo and Asst. Chief Kiel, could not cite a reason for me to be on administrative leave, other than the investigation was ongoing. I was returned to duty shortly thereafter. After being returned to full duty, Captain Harriman and Lieutenant Pope refused to approve my overtime and time-off requests. Captain Harriman and Lieutenant Pope approved overtime and time-off requests to other detectives and investigators, but they refused to approve mine. Generally, Captain Harriman and Lieutenant Pope are responsible for approving overtime and time-off requests for personnel in the investigations division. Patrol sergeants are responsible for approving time off requests for personnel in the patrol division. Sergeant Rude and Sergeant Poskozim noticed Captain Harriman and Lieutenant Pope’s refusal to approve my requests and asked permission to take care of it themselves. It is ironic that Captain Harriman and Lieutenant Pope appear to be punishing me by refusing to approve entries in the same system they claimed I was circumventing.

When I returned to full duty, I learned that Captain Harriman had spoken with Sgt. Wilson and encouraged him to remove me from the taskforce and take away my desk at the Duluth office. According to Sergeant Wilson, this conversation occurred shortly after I was returned to duty from administrative leave.

Following my return to duty, Sgt. Wilson contacted Captain Harriman to get clarification of SPD’s expectations for me because there was clearly a disconnect. According to Sergeant Wilson, Captain Harriman refused to clarify his expectations and suggested he ‘call my husband.’ I find this incredibly demeaning and disrespectful, and it helps paint a very clear picture of Captain Harriman’s bias in the matter.

Following my return to duty, Captain Harriman refused to respond to multiple text messages I sent him with important questions, including specific questions about scheduling expectations. The problem became so bad that I had to reach out to Human Resources on the matter. I received a response from Captain Harriman only after I complained to Human Resources.

After Sgt. Wilson attempted to clarify my schedule with Capt. Harriman, I also attempted to resolve the issue. Capt. Harriman told me “I am not dealing with your schedule, Paul can do that”. This was in the presence of Detective Coffman.

Because I was living in such paranoia of making another unknown mistake, I asked for a sit down meeting with Capt. Harriman on 12/07/2024. Capt. Harriman was in the schedule as “Days”. I arrived at the police department around 0830. Capt. Harriman was nowhere to be found. Capt. Harriman rolled into work, outside of dress code, just before 0900. Only after I demanded to know my scheduling expectations, did I receive an answer and directive from Capt. Harriman.

In another particularly disturbing situation, Asst. Chief Kiel threatened to release details of my internal investigation to the media if I did not accept a strong disciplinary outcome without being provided any information about the investigation. I will be able to provide that email if necessary. The WPPA (Wisconsin Professional Police Association) Union Representative, Bob Powell, requested all reports on my internal investigation, but he was denied. This represented a clear effort to coerce me into taking a strong disciplinary outcome. Asst. Chief Kiel also docked on an extra “20 hours” of stolen time, with no explanation! One of the provisions of Asst. Chief Kiel’s “settlement agreement” for a speedy resolution to this investigation, was forfeiting any and all of my rights damages related discrimination. Umm... No thanks. I find this to be a despicable and demeaning offer by the City after they were made aware of my continued harassment and retaliation.

Officer Lucas Ciciora reached out to Mayor Paine as a whistleblower on my behalf because of the violations of law and policy he was witnessing. We were able to meet with Mayor Paine shortly thereafter and explained many of the details outlined in this rebuttal letter. Mayor Paine took control of the internal investigation from Asst. Chief Kiel and resolved the matter with a non-disciplinary letter of counsel. Asst. Chief Kiel abruptly moved his last day of work up from his planned retirement date. It should be noted that Asst. Chief Kiel sent a department-wide parting email that was highly critical of Chief Winterscheidt in his usual passive-aggressive manner. Chief Winterscheidt and I were the only department staff not included in the email distribution. Does this sound like someone who has no “bias” against myself or Chief Winterscheidt?

Asst. Chief Kiel lied directly to my face, again, at the 2024 Superior Police Department Christmas party. When I confronted Asst. Chief Kiel about him trying to paint the picture that I am a liar, he told me that this was nothing personal. I asked Asst. Chief Kiel why he failed to send his “good-bye” email to everyone in the police department except Chief Winterscheidt and I, he told me that he purposefully only took Chief Winterscheidt off of the email exchange. Asst. Chief Kiel told me he didn’t send Chief Winterscheidt his good-bye email because he had already said everything in the command staff meeting, so he didn’t think Chief Winterscheidt needed to hear it again. I asked Asst. Chief Kiel why he included every other member of the command staff on that email chain who had already heard everything he had to say at the staff meeting. Asst. Chief Kiel’s response was “I can’t answer that question Mikayla.”

While I was on administrative leave, Capt. Harriman again reached out to Sgt. Wilson. Capt. Harriman accused Sgt. Wilson and Lt. Tanski of the LSVOTF of “leaking details” of my internal investigation, which disclosed Mr. Hardman’s identity. I find this conversation telling, as it illustrates Capt. Harriman’s concerns with information circulating about Mr. Hardman’s involvement in my internal investigation. It was clear the police department administration wanted this information to be concealed as long as possible. This theory is easily reiterated if you view the recording of my interview with Mr. Hardman. Mr. Hardman, confrontationally, asked myself and Officer Ciciora, how we were made aware of who he was prior to the date of the interview. I did not know who Mr.

Hardman was before he had interviewed me. I remember thinking, why does this man care if we knew who he was prior to this interview? Now it all makes sense.

This internal investigation has been a nightmare. I value my career in law enforcement. My father was a police officer, and his brother was a police officer. The LeRette name has a strong reputation in the law enforcement community, and I would never do anything to tarnish that reputation. Unfortunately, I faced a determined group of people who thought they owned the police department, thought they were entitled to promotions, and thought they could violate my civil rights with impunity. I believe they were motivated to retaliate against me because I was the first police officer to become pregnant in more than 20 years, and my intention to continue working did not align with what they thought a pregnant woman should be allowed to do. The evidence for this is in their own statements and actions. The audacity of their actions and behaviors were nothing short of ridiculous. Unsubstantiated allegations were spread from members of the command staff to my coworkers and officers from other departments. Details of the internal investigation were leaked to officers and deputies in the Superior Police Department and Douglas County Sheriff's Department. In fact, I first learned of the tracker being placed on my assigned car through information provided by officers and deputies.

Unfortunately, I believe the actions of the Asst. Chief, Captain Champaigne, Captain Harriman, and Lieutenant Pope have permanently tarnished my reputation as a law enforcement officer in our community and permanently interfered in my ability to do my job. I am concerned that no amount of retraction, apology, or damage control can fix the damage they have caused. I have suffered physical and mental damages from this experience, and I have lost time that I will never get back. I know I did not misrepresent or lie about anything, and I believe the totality of circumstances in this case clearly demonstrate that. While I may win this battle, it appears they have gotten what they wanted – to destroy my career.

This investigation has been a targeted attempt to destroy my career due to my pregnancies, use of FMLA time, and perceived association with administrative decisions beyond my control. The clear bias, selective enforcement of policies, and retaliatory actions taken against me have permanently damaged my professional standing.

I request that my record be cleared of any allegations of dishonesty or misconduct, and I urge an external review of the actions taken against me to ensure accountability for those who abused their authority.

Sincerely,

Mikayla LeRette

**From:** "LeRette"  
**Sent:** Thu, 17 Nov 2022 17:48:34 +0000  
**To:** "Alexander, Nicholas F." <alexandern@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Subject:** Re: nursing/expressing room

Thank you

Sent from my iPhone

On Nov 17, 2022, at 09:36, Alexander, Nicholas F.  
<alexandern@ci.superior.wi.us> wrote:

Hi Mikayla – see below – if you want to use the dedicated room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
the email below tells you what you need to do.

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**From:** Ronchi, Kathy <Kathy.Ronchi@douglascountywi.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 17, 2022 8:10 AM  
**To:** Alexander, Nicholas F. <alexandern@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Subject:** RE: nursing/expressing room

We absolutely can accommodate that. We have a process here. If you would  
like her to come to 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and ask to talk with the intake nurse, Cindy can  
go over that with her and show her the space.

***Kathy Ronchi, MPH, RN***  
***Health Officer***

Douglas County Department of Health and Human Services  
Public Health  
1316 North 14th Street, Suite #324  
Superior, WI 54880  
Phone: 715-395-1494

Fax: 715-395-1434

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**From:** Alexander, Nicholas F. <[alexandern@ci.superior.wi.us](mailto:alexandern@ci.superior.wi.us)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 16, 2022 5:41 PM

**To:** Ronchi, Kathy <[Kathy.Ronchi@douglascountywi.org](mailto:Kathy.Ronchi@douglascountywi.org)>

**Subject:** nursing/expressing room

Hi Kathy – Anna from the 4<sup>th</sup> floor told me that you may have a room set up for nursing/expressing for mothers. I just had an officer return to work who has this need. Is your room a place that could be made available to her? She is currently scheduled where she works during the day. Thanks in advance, Nick

Nicholas F. Alexander

Chief of Police

Superior Police Department

1316 N. 14th St. Suite 150

Superior, WI 54880

email: [alexandern@ci.superior.wi.us](mailto:alexandern@ci.superior.wi.us)

phone: (715) 395-7465

fax: (715) 395-7574

The Superior Police Department is sworn to protect, committed to justice and dedicated to professional service.

Security – Service – Equality – Professionalism – Department Members

## Pope, Michelle

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**From:** Pope, Michelle  
**Sent:** Monday, October 3, 2022 11:59 AM  
**To:** LeRette, Mikayla  
**Subject:** RE: Schedule

Thanks, Mikayla. I'm very sorry for your loss. [REDACTED]

Thinking of you all.

Michelle

-----Original Message-----

**From:** LeRette, Mikayla <lerettem@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 3, 2022 8:50 AM  
**To:** Pope, Michelle <popem@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Subject:** Schedule

Hey Michelle,

Just letting you know I will be changing a few of my days off to bereavement leave. We have had two deaths in the family. My Aunt Diane in Iowa and Paul's Uncle in Superior :( I will take a look and swap out the days I just wanted to let you know as my supervisor.

Hope you are doing well and I'll stop in soon to say hi!

Mikayla

Sent from my iPhone

## Pope, Michelle

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**From:** Pope, Michelle  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 1, 2022 2:10 PM  
**To:** LeRette, Mikayla  
**Subject:** FW: mikayla lerette

Hi Mikayla—

I just wanted to pass along your accruals.

I marked you off through October 31<sup>st</sup>. I put you in for thirteen 8-hour days of comp time = 104 hours. (Another -3.75 hours was used in combination with -4.25 hours of sick time for a 14<sup>th</sup> day.)

I marked you off for thirty 8-hour days using sick time. The total used for that 30 days is -240 (and the -4.25 sick time used to make up the remainder of your partial comp time day) for a total of 244.25 hours.

You have one floating holiday and 175.75 hours of sick time remaining.

I also had to switch three days this week from vacation to sick time because your vacation was depleted as of Monday.

Thanks, Mikayla. I hope all is going well!

Michelle

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**From:** Janigo, Cammi L. <janigoc@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 1, 2022 1:22 PM  
**To:** Pope, Michelle <popem@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Cc:** Williams, Deb <williamsd@ci.superior.wi.us>; Archer, Beth <archerb@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Subject:** RE: mikayla lerette

Here you go Michelle (use Total column). There amounts would be as of 8/28/22. Let me know if you have any questions.

in ⇅	Accrual Type ⇅	Previous ⇅
▼	COMP TIME	.000
▼	FTO-EV TECH FLE	.000
▼	FLOATING HOLIDAY	.000
▼	FITNESS FLEX DAY	.000
▼	PERSONAL DAY	.000
▼	SICK LEAVE	348.000
▼	VACATION	.000

## Pope, Michelle

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**From:** Pope, Michelle  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 8, 2022 5:53 AM  
**To:** LeRette, Mikayla  
**Subject:** Re:

Thanks Mikayla. I'm glad you made it home safely. Talk to you soon

Sent from my iPhone

> On Jun 8, 2022, at 1:39 AM, LeRette, Mikayla <lerettem@ci.superior.wi.us> wrote:

>

> Hey Michelle. Just got home. Going to sleep in today and come in later. Talk to you then!!

>

> Sent from my iPhone

## Pope, Michelle

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**From:** Pope, Michelle  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 22, 2022 8:34 AM  
**To:** LeRette, Mikayla  
**Subject:** RE: In late 2/22

Thanks, Mikayla.

-----Original Message-----

**From:** LeRette, Mikayla <lerettem@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 22, 2022 8:30 AM  
**To:** Pope, Michelle <popem@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Subject:** In late 2/22

Good morning,

I'll be in at noon today I submitted time off just letting you know.

Sent from my iPhone

## Pope, Michelle

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**From:** Pope, Michelle  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 11:57 AM  
**To:** LeRette, Mikayla  
**Subject:** RE: time off

No worries. You were a little busy/distracted yesterday. 😊

I'll enter it in. Thank you!

---

**From:** LeRette, Mikayla <lerettem@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 15, 2022 11:56 AM  
**To:** Pope, Michelle <popem@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Subject:** Re: time off

Shoot I'm sorry I never did enter it! Floating Holiday please !

Sent from my iPhone

On Feb 15, 2022, at 11:38, Pope, Michelle <[popem@ci.superior.wi.us](mailto:popem@ci.superior.wi.us)> wrote:

Hi Mikayla—

How did you want your time off entered from yesterday?

Thanks.

Michelle

**Michelle M. Pope**  
**Investigations Lieutenant**  
**Superior Police Department**  
**1316 N. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 150**  
**Superior, WI 54880**  
**Desk: 715/395-7416, Cell: 218/341-3119**

## Pope, Michelle

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**From:** Pope, Michelle  
**Sent:** Monday, October 19, 2020 2:54 PM  
**To:** LeRette, Mikayla  
**Subject:** RE: Time off

Sounds good. I fixed your vacation time today.

Good luck tomorrow if you end up coming in!

-----Original Message-----

**From:** LeRette, Mikayla <lerettem@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 19, 2020 2:53 PM  
**To:** Pope, Michelle <popem@ci.superior.wi.us>  
**Subject:** Re: Time off

Yes we just have an arrest of one guy in Superior tomorrow I will try and help out as much as I can

Sent from my iPhone

> On Oct 19, 2020, at 14:17, Pope, Michelle <popem@ci.superior.wi.us> wrote:

>

> Sure. I'll adjust it. I think Monte thinks you'll be there tomorrow...

>

> I hope everything is going well for you. Big day is coming quickly! :)

>

> -----Original Message-----

> **From:** LeRette, Mikayla <lerettem@ci.superior.wi.us>

> **Sent:** Monday, October 19, 2020 12:57 PM

> **To:** Pope, Michelle <popem@ci.superior.wi.us>

> **Subject:** Time off

>

> Hey Michelle,

>

> Not sure how to do this but I ended up working until noon today. Can I retract 4 hours of time off today?

>

> I also might help with an arrest tomorrow for the huge case Duluth task force is wrapping up.

>

> Thank you!

>

> Sent from my iPhone

**Subject:** FW: light duty attire  
**Date:** Friday, October 10, 2025 at 9:27:33 AM Pacific Daylight Time  
**From:** Pope, Michelle  
**To:** Michael Gennaco, Stephen Connolly  
**Attachments:** Uniform\_Regulations.pdf

Good Morning-

I understand that the investigation into our Department is ongoing. For this reason, I'm passing along the email below and the attachment that went with it. I located it this morning while compiling data for a request by our HR department. I don't know that I shared this with you previously and thought it might be helpful as it relates to one of the allegations made against me. It was sent by then-Captain Champaigne to the officers that were on light duty at the time of the email.

I also want to make sure I clarified one point that has been bothering me since we met. It addresses another of the allegations made against me regarding her return to work in a light duty status in November, 2022.

It was alleged that I treated ML differently than other (specifically male) officers that were on light duty in that I did not let her keep working her regular assignment. I wanted to take this opportunity to make sure the situation was explained clearly:

1. I did not give anyone preferential treatment.
2. ML was on a two-person narcotics team in 2022. When she left for [REDACTED] leave, her partner Ron was reassigned to the patrol division. The decision was made that he could not work by himself/without a partner for that long of a timeframe, so he was reassigned to patrol for the entire fall sheet (roughly September to January).

ML came back to work in a light duty status on 11/07/22. This was in the middle of the fall patrol schedule. Because of staffing shortages, Ron was to stay on patrol until the end of the bidding sheet which was in January, 2023. ML was aware of this prior to her return to work.

ML was on light duty (which at the time, our long-standing policy prohibited her from carrying a gun, having one-on-one interactions with people and driving a city vehicle), [REDACTED] and she also did not have a partner. For these reasons, she was not placed back to her assignment as an investigator while on light duty.

I think that Ron would have had an argument for unfair treatment if she was able to work in

narcotics by herself (and on light duty, and with doctor-prescribed limitations) after he got assigned to patrol because he could not work as a narcotics officer by himself—without any doctor-prescribed limitations.

Perhaps this information is not necessary as you continue your investigation, but I wanted to pass it along. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Michelle Pope

**Michelle M. Pope**  
**Patrol Captain**  
**Superior Police Department**  
**1316 N. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 150**  
**Superior, WI 54880**  
**Desk: 715-395-7416, Cell: 218-341-3119**

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**From:** Champaign II, Thomas D. <[champaignet@ci.superior.wi.us](mailto:champaignet@ci.superior.wi.us)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 9, 2022 2:00 PM  
**To:** Davis, Kelsey <[davisk@ci.superior.wi.us](mailto:davisk@ci.superior.wi.us)>; LeRette, Mikayla <[lerettem@ci.superior.wi.us](mailto:lerettem@ci.superior.wi.us)>  
**Cc:** Pope, Michelle <[popem@ci.superior.wi.us](mailto:popem@ci.superior.wi.us)>  
**Subject:** light duty attire

Please take a look at the uniform regulations. Those working light duty must present a professional image. If someone is assigned light duty in the records area they would need to be in professional attire. While working with Jennie in evidence, you can wear docker style pants, uniform pants or other business casual attire, leggings, denim or stretch pants are not allowed by policy.

If you have questions please let me know.

Thank you

Thomas Champaigne  
Superior Police Department  
Captain of Investigations  
1316 N.14<sup>th</sup> St Suite 150  
Superior WI 54880  
715-395-7624  
[champaignet@ci.superior.wi.us](mailto:champaignet@ci.superior.wi.us)



## Uniform Regulations

### 1024.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The uniform policy of the Superior Police Department is established to ensure that uniformed officers, special assignment personnel and civilian employees will be readily identifiable to the public through the proper use and wearing of department uniforms. Employees should also refer to the following policies:

- Firearms
- Department-Owned and Personal Property
- Body Armor
- Personal Appearance Standards

The uniform and equipment specifications manual is maintained and periodically updated by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee. The manual should be consulted regarding authorized equipment and uniform specifications.

The Superior Police Department will provide uniforms for all new employees who are required to wear them in the manner and quantity agreed upon in the respective employee's collective bargaining agreement.

### 1024.2 WEARING AND CONDITION OF UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT

Police employees wear the uniform to be identified as the law enforcement authority in society. The uniform also serves an equally important purpose, which is to identify the wearer as a source of assistance in an emergency, crisis or other time of need.

- (a) Uniform and equipment shall be maintained in a serviceable condition and shall be ready at all times for immediate use. Uniforms shall be neat, clean and free of wrinkles.
- (b) All officers of this department shall possess and maintain at all times a serviceable uniform and the necessary equipment to perform uniformed field duty.
- (c) Personnel shall wear only the uniform specified for their rank and assignment.
- (d) Employees shall not loan any portion of the uniform to non-officers.
- (e) Employees shall not permit the uniform to be reproduced or duplicated.
- (f)
- (g) Civilian attire shall not be worn in combination with any distinguishable part of the uniform, except when transiting directly to or from work.
- (h) Uniforms are only to be worn while on-duty, while in transit to or from work, for court or at other official department functions or events.
- (i) If the uniform is worn while in transit an outer garment should be worn over the uniform shirt so as not to bring attention to the employee while he/she is off-duty.

# Superior Police Department

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### *Uniform Regulations*

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- (j) Employees are not to purchase or drink alcoholic beverages while wearing any distinguishable part of the department uniform.
- (k) Mirrored sunglasses will not be worn with any department uniform. Sunglasses will have neutral colored frames.
- (l) Visible jewelry, other than those items listed below, shall not be worn with the uniform, unless specifically authorized by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.
  - 1. Wrist watch
  - 2. Wedding rings, class ring or other ring of tasteful design; a maximum of two rings/sets may be worn on each hand
  - 3. Medical alert bracelet
  - 4. Necklaces or other decorative jewelry may be worn if kept within the shirt and out of sight.
  - 5. Officers may wear ear ring studs in the ear lobes. No other piercings shall be visible while on duty in uniform or civilian attire.
- (m) Supervisors shall address violations of policy immediately with their personnel.

#### **1024.2.1 DEPARTMENT-ISSUED IDENTIFICATION**

The Department issues each employee an official department identification card bearing the employee's name, identifying information and photo likeness. All employees shall be in possession of their department-issued identification card at all times while on-duty or when carrying a concealed weapon.

- (a) Whenever on-duty or acting in an official capacity representing the Department, employees shall display their department-issued identification in a courteous manner to any person upon request and as soon as practicable.
- (b) Officers working specialized assignments may be excused from the requirements regarding the possession and display of identification when directed by their Division Commander.

#### **1024.3 UNIFORM CLASSES**

The various uniform specification classes are those identified in this policy.

##### **1024.3.1 CLASS A UNIFORM**

The Class A uniform is to be worn on special occasions, such as court, funerals, graduations, ceremonies or as directed by the Chief of Police or designee. The Class A uniform is required for all sworn personnel. The Class A uniform includes the standard issue uniform with a long-sleeve shirt and tie, and polished boots or shoes; athletic shoes are not permitted. A whistle lanyard is optional.

The 8-point hat may be worn for events held outdoors. Boots with pointed toes are not permitted.

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### *Uniform Regulations*

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Officers holding the rank of Lieutenant or higher may substitute a white, long sleeve uniform shirt in place of the dark navy blue uniform shirt with the Class A uniform.

#### 1024.3.2 CLASS B UNIFORM

All officers will possess and maintain a serviceable Class B uniform at all times.

The Class B uniform will consist of the same garments and equipment as the Class A uniform with the following exceptions:

- (a) The long- or short-sleeve shirt may be worn with the collar open. No tie is required. While wearing a short-sleeve shirt, the sleeves of the undershirt shall not be visible.
- (b) Cargo-style uniform pants are acceptable.
- (c) A white, navy blue or black crew neck undershirt must be worn with the uniform. A black or navy blue turtle-neck may be worn with the long-sleeve shirt. The turtle-neck may be embroidered with SPD in white or silver colored letters.
- (d) All shirt buttons must remain buttoned except for the last button at the neck.
- (e) Shoes for the Class B uniform may be as described in the Class A uniform. All black, leather, athletic shoes are acceptable so long as they are capable of being shined.
- (f) Boots with pointed toes are not permitted.
- (g) A dark navy blue baseball cap may be worn with this uniform. The cap will have the department patch on the front. The officer's employee number may be embroidered on the cap at the officer's expense.
- (h) A navy blue, trooper-style hat, with ear flaps may be worn during cold weather. Department issued, dark blue or black stocking caps are acceptable during cold weather.

Officers holding the rank of Lieutenant or higher may substitute a white, long or short sleeve uniform shirt in place of the dark navy blue uniform shirt with the Class B uniform.

[Superior Police Department Procedure Manual: 1001.1 APPROVED UNIFORMS-MANUFACTURERS AND MODELS](#)

#### 1024.3.3 SPECIALIZED UNIT UNIFORMS

The Chief of Police may authorize special uniforms to be worn by officers in specialized units, such as the canine team, SWAT, bicycle patrol, motor officers and other specialized assignments, such as Community Services Officers and Crisis response Specialists.

#### 1024.4 JACKETS

Uniform jackets will be dark navy blue in color. Officers are free to select the style of jacket that works best for them and their ability to perform their job. Officers currently that possess black leather jackets are granted an exception for the service life of the jacket. Jackets must be

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kept in good condition and cleaned on a regular basis. Leather jackets must be conditioned and dyed when they begin to fade. Uniform jackets must display the department shoulder patch and department badge. Sergeants will wear chevrons on the sleeves of jackets. Name tapes or name tags are optional on the uniform jacket

OPTIONAL: Service bars will be worn on the left lower sleeve of the jacket, starting at the seam on the upper part of the cuff. One service bar will be displayed for each four years of service. Service bars will be silver colored on a dark blue background.

#### **1024.5 DUTY GEAR**

All officers shall be issued, prior to beginning recruit school or starting in the field training program, all duty gear required by the Superior Police Department.

[Superior Police Department Procedure Manual: 1002.1 ISSUED EQUIPMENT](#)

#### **1024.6 INSIGNIA AND PATCHES**

- (a) The authorized shoulder patch supplied by the Department shall be machine stitched to the sleeves of all uniform shirts and jackets, 3/4-inch below the shoulder seam of the shirt, and should be bisected by the crease in the sleeve.
- (b) Service stripes and other indicators for length of service may be worn on long-sleeve shirts and jackets. They are to be machine stitched onto the uniform. The bottom of the service stripe shall be sewn 1 1/2-inches above the cuff seam with the rear of the service stripes sewn on the dress of the sleeve. The stripes are to be worn on the left sleeve only.
- (c) The regulation nameplate, an authorized sewn-on cloth nameplate or embroidered name, shall be worn at all times while in uniform. The nameplate shall display the employee's first initial and last name. If the employee desires other than the legal first name, the employee must receive approval from the Chief of Police. The nameplate shall be worn and placed above the right pocket, located in the middle, bisected by the pressed shirt seam, with equal distance from both sides of the nameplate to the outer edge of the pocket.
- (d) When a jacket is worn, the nameplate or an authorized sewn-on cloth nameplate may be affixed to the jacket in the same manner as the uniform.
- (e) Assignment insignias, including Motor Officer, ERT, Honor Guard, Negotiator, Dive Team, FTO, and Tactical Technology Team (TTT) may be worn as designated by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.
- (f)
- (g)
- (h) The department-issued badge or an authorized sewn-on cloth replica must be worn and be visible at all times while in uniform. Sworn non-uniform personnel will wear or

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carry the badge so it is on the same side of the body, and directly next to the firearm and can be displayed whenever appropriate. A lanyard style badge worn around the neck is also acceptable.

- (i) The designated insignia indicating the employee's rank must be worn at all times while in uniform. The rank insignia may be metal pins or embroidered. The Chief of Police or the authorized designee may authorize exceptions.

1. Officers holding the rank of Chief, Assistant Chief, Captain or Lieutenant will wear gold-colored insignia denoting the rank on their uniform shirt collar. Officers holding the rank of Sergeant will wear silver-colored insignia on uniform shirt collars and fabric chevrons on jacket sleeves and uniform sleeves.

2. Rank insignia are:

- a. Chief of Police = 1 Star
- b. Assistant Chief of Police = Oak Leaf Cluster
- c. Captain = 2 bars
- d. Lieutenant = 1 bar
- e. Sergeant = 3 chevrons
- f. Officers = S.P.D. silver-colored pins to be worn as shown in attached appendix.

j. Award Ribbons may be worn at the officer's discretion. Award ribbons will be centered above the nameplate or worn in pairs, side by side, centered above the nameplate. Two award ribbons may be worn on the Class B uniform. The officer can wear all award ribbons on the Class A uniform.

k. Service bars, if worn, will be worn on the left lower sleeve of the jacket or long sleeve shirt, starting at the seam on the upper part of the cuff. One service bar will be displayed for each four years of service. Service bars will be silver colored on a dark, navy background.

[See attachment: Appendix Uniforms 2.png](#)

#### 1024.6.1 MOURNING BADGE BAND

Uniformed employees may wear a black mourning band across the uniform badge whenever a law enforcement officer is killed in the line of duty. The following mourning periods will be observed:

- (a) An officer of this department - From the time of death until midnight on the 14th day after the death.
- (b) A peace officer from this or an adjacent county - From the time of death until midnight on the day of the funeral.
- (c) Funeral attendee - While attending the funeral of an out-of-region peace officer.
- (d) National Peace Officers Memorial Day (May 15) - From 0001 hours until 2359 hours.
- (e) As directed by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

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#### **1024.7 CIVILIAN ATTIRE**

There are assignments within the Department that do not require wearing a uniform because recognition and authority are not essential to their function. There are also assignments in which wearing civilian attire is necessary.

- (a) All employees shall wear clothing that fits properly, is clean and free of stains and not damaged or excessively worn.
- (b) All male administrative, investigative and support personnel who elect to wear civilian clothing to work shall wear button-style shirts with a collar, sweaters, polo shirts, dress pants, including Docker's™ style pants or suits that are moderate in style.
- (c) All female administrative, investigative and support personnel who elect to wear civilian clothes to work shall wear dress pants, including Docker's™ style pants, shirts, blouses or suits that are moderate in style. Non-sworn personnel may wear dresses.
- (d) While wearing a polo shirt or short-sleeve button-style shirt, the undershirt sleeves shall not be visible. Wearing a long sleeve shirt under a short sleeve shirt is not authorized.
- (e) The following items shall not be worn on-duty:
  - 1. T-shirt alone
  - 2. Open-toed sandals, thongs or open heels.
  - 3. Swimsuit, tube tops or halter tops
  - 4. Spandex type pants or see-through clothing
  - 5. Distasteful or politically motivated printed slogans, buttons or pins
  - 6. Denim pants of any color
  - 7. Cargo-style pants
  - 8. Shorts
  - 9. Sweatshirts, sweatpants or similar exercise clothing
  - 10. Athletic shoes
  - 11. References to polo shirts include the following restrictions:
    - (a) Any logo, if present, will represent the Superior Police Department, another professional police agency or organization or a unit of local, state or federal government.
    - (b) Logos of private companies, alcoholic beverages, logos that are offensive in nature, in bad taste or do not represent the Superior Police Department in good light are prohibited.
    - (c) Logos representing the shirt manufacturer are acceptable.

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- (f) Variations from this order are allowed at the discretion of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee when the employee's assignment or current task is not conducive to wearing such clothing, such as firearms or DAAT training.
- (g) No item of civilian attire may be worn on-duty that would adversely affect the reputation of the Superior Police Department or the morale of the employees.
- (h) Sworn employees carrying firearms while wearing civilian attire may wear clothing that effectively conceals the firearm when outside a controlled law enforcement facility or work area.

#### **1024.8 POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, ENDORSEMENTS, ADVERTISEMENTS OR OTHER APPEARANCES IN UNIFORM**

Unless specifically authorized by the Chief of Police, Superior Police Department employees may not wear any part of the uniform, be photographed wearing any part of the uniform, utilize a department badge, patch or other official insignia, or cause to be posted, published or displayed, the image of another employee, or identify him/herself as an employee of the Superior Police Department to do any of the following (Wis. Stat. § 164.015):

- (a) Endorse, support, oppose or contradict any political campaign or initiative.
- (b) Endorse, support, oppose or contradict any social issue, cause or religion.
- (c) Endorse, support or oppose, any product, service, company or other commercial entity.
- (d) Appear in any commercial, social or nonprofit publication, or on any motion picture, film, video, public broadcast or on any website.

#### **1024.9 OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT - MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT**

- (a) Any of the items listed in the uniform and equipment specifications manual as optional shall be purchased at the expense of the employee. No part of the purchase cost shall be offset by the Department.
- (b) Maintenance of optional items shall be the financial responsibility of the purchasing employee (e.g., repairs due to normal wear and tear).
- (c) Replacement of items listed in this order as optional shall be done as follows:
  1. When the item is no longer functional because of normal wear and tear, the employee bears the full cost of replacement.
  2. When the item is no longer functional because of damage in the course of the employee's duties, it shall be replaced following the procedures for the replacement of damaged personal property outlined in the Department-Owned and Personal Property Policy.

# Superior Police Department

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#### **1024.10 UNAUTHORIZED UNIFORMS, EQUIPMENT AND ACCESSORIES**

Superior Police Department employees may not wear any uniform item, accessory or attachment unless specifically authorized in the uniform and equipment specifications manual or by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

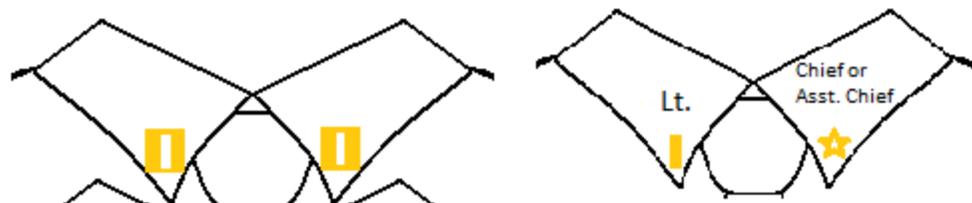
Superior Police Department employees may not use or carry any safety item, tool or other piece of equipment unless specifically authorized in the uniform and equipment specifications manual or by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee.

#### **1024.11 NOTIFICATION**

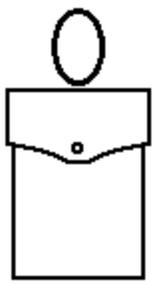
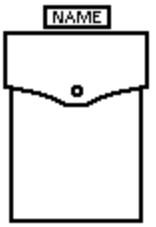
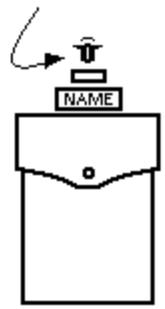
The Department shall, at the time of hiring, notify each employee of the uniform regulations and clothing requirements (Wis. Stat. § 103.14).

## **Attachments**

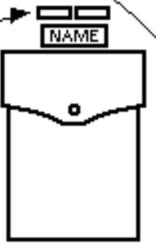
## **Appendix Uniforms 2.png**



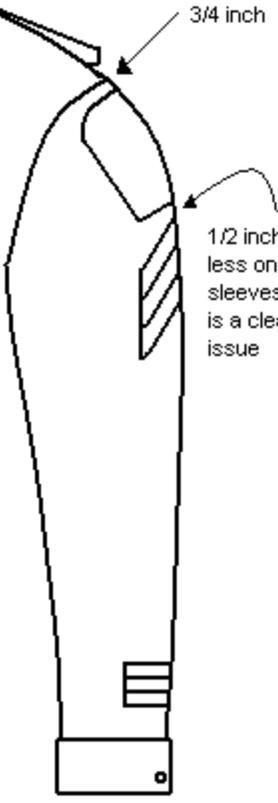
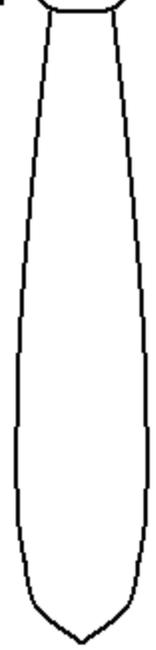
One special assignment pin may be worn.



Award Ribbons are worn centered above the name plate. Ribbons are side by side if worn in pairs.



Tie is optional or when directed by chief of police.



3/4 inch

1/2 inch (may be less on short sleeves if there is a clearance issue)