

Exhibit 527

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

January 2026

Independent Investigators  
Michael Gennaco  
Stephen Connolly

OIR  
GROUP

OIR  
GROUP

6510 Spring Street #613  
Long Beach, CA 90815  
OIRGroup.com

WWW.SouthernPrutz.net

## 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 maternity 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

---

<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 maternity 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 maternity 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.

---

<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 pregnancy.

---

<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

Pregnancy 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 Pregnancy***

Investigator LeRette was working in Superior's Narcotics unit at the time of her first pregnancy. 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

---

<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 maternity 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

---

<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 maternity 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

---

<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.

---

<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

---

<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."

### ***Disparate Treatment Regarding Light Duty Assignment***

In the aftermath of her first pregnancy and maternity leave, Investigator LeRette returned to work in a "light duty" capacity – a status that re-assigns Department employees to positions that accommodate their temporary physical restrictions while on a path to full recovery. Then-Lt. Pope initially assigned Investigator LeRette to work in the Department's property room upon her return in November of 2022.

By her own account, Investigator LeRette had significant concerns about this assignment. She worried about the health implications of exposure to drug evidence, for example, and believed she would be more productive to the agency if allowed to perform office-related investigative functions (such as computer work, drafting of warrants, etc.) She eventually brought her concerns to Chief Alexander, who advised her to check with her healthcare provider about the potential need for further medical restrictions that would preclude her from continuing with property room duty. She took this advice, got a responsive doctor's note, and was re-assigned for the duration of her light duty period.

Investigator LeRette later asserted that the decision to put her in the property room was punitive and discriminatory in nature – a deliberate effort on the part of Captain Tom Champaigne and then-Lt. Pope to make her life "as difficult as possible." As she explained in her "Rebuttal" letter to Mayor Paine, she believed the property room assignment had been used by the Department as punishment in the past. She also cited examples of other Department members who had been given the kind of alternative role she had unsuccessfully requested, which in her mind showed that denying her the same opportunity was hostile in nature.

Investigator LeRette also took exception to the requirement that she wear uniform pants while serving in her property room role. She claimed that another officer had been allowed to dress less formally, and cited the fact that she herself had been allowed to wear leggings while pregnant.

Captain Pope addressed these issues during her interview for this investigation. She acknowledged being in charge of supervising light duty. She also pointed out that the whole concept of light duty was meant as a benefit for officers, so that they could perform some job function and not have to use their own leave time during recovery. She said potential assignments were discussed among command staff.

Captain Pope explained that in 2022, the property room had been neglected for a considerable period of time, and needed attention. This was the motivation for putting light duty personnel into that role, both before and after Investigator LeRette's brief tenure, and mentioned some of the officers by name. She said, "That was where the work was," and denied having any punitive intent in placing LeRette in that role.

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 maternity 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 maternity 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

---

<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."

WWW.Souphnutz.net