

Gentlemen of the Board of Alderman and our valued citizens, I have a situation that needs to be addressed. I have served this Town and community as a Firefighter, Crossing Guard, Street Department Worker, and volunteered my time as an Intern for the Police Department while in college obtaining my degree. I not only live in this community but I love this community, but I must make public a complaint which has gone unaddressed for quite some time.

The Chief of Police, Laurence Dennis, has gone beyond the scope of his duties and misused his authority to verbally abuse not only myself (as a citizen and former city employee, prior to being elected, and now as an alderman) but also our Police Officers, both current and former, other city officials, and citizens alike.

It started when I was the crossing guard, I had left my post slightly earlier than normal. It was my understanding that he was frustrated from something that had occurred earlier in the day with another city official in reference to a purchase order issue. **When I told him I had left, he drew his service weapon and put it in a way where I could see the side of his Glock. He then stated that he wanted to start shooting different city employees.** I was young and naive. I let that incident go because I thought he would change, yet he didn't.

I continued working for the department believing that it was an isolated incident and perhaps he had had a really bad day.

On another day and separate occasion, I had left early again, I had gone down the hill to Apache trail in my city issued Ford Explorer and was going to tell the chief that I was done for the day. The Chief looked at me and cussed me using the "F" word (which I will not repeat) and he informed that he was the chief and I would do as he said. This outburst was made outside, in front of Former Police Officer Mealer, Former Police Officer Torok, and Officer King, and within earshot of several citizens who were driving by.

Following that incident, I spoke with former Mayor Sam Childs, which told me that he "counseled" Chief Dennis for that outburst. Former Mayor Childs told me that **"Laurence was very protective of his job and he was under a lot of stress"** and that is why he didn't do much about the incident as far as disciplinary action against Chief Dennis.

In another incident, Chief Dennis pulled his service weapon. This incident is regarding the abandoned dog (Baby) that called City Hall her "home". The same dog that the ladies in the office of city hall had named and fed. On this occasion Chief Dennis responded to Baby's small growl by drawing and pointing his service weapon at the dog. Upon coming back into City Hall he made several threats to shoot the dog. There were pleas from the ladies in the front offices begging him not to shoot Baby. This incident had visibly shaken one of our employees.

I then left the city at the end of that school year and got a job with the Music City Center, I ran for the office and was elected as an Alderman. I hoped that the Chief's stress level (according to former Mayor Childs) had improved and hoped that Chief Dennis would respect my new position as Alderman (since he had not shown me any respect in the past). He did not and continues to fail to show respect or self-restraint towards me in the completion of my duties as an alderman.

I also would like for you to know about an incident involving Chief Dennis and I on the 8th of March of this year. I had been in his office to discuss the purchase of a new patrol car, which is an issue, that was a discussion point by the board and on the agenda. All I told him was that I agreed with him and that he needed to get the approval of 3 other alderman. **When I said that he went into a rage. He threw a pair of scissors to the floor and kept berating Officer Roesler and myself. He left the room and went up and down the hall screaming as he paced. He found Sergeant Hayley and began complaining to him. He then went to the front office. When Officer Roesler went to check on him, Officer Roesler returned and told me that I had to leave. I asked for confirmation that I was being asked to leave and Officer Roesler confirmed.** He had me removed for stating my opinion on a matter which was on the agenda of the Board and in that instance, I was actually agreeing with him on the matter.

As an Alderman, I have confirmed with our city attorney, that no, I should not have been asked to leave.

As not only a citizen of Coopertown but also as an Alderman, I also find it quite alarming that since Chief Dennis took over in August of 2015, the high turn-over rate of officers at this agency. The Chief has hired, or attempted to hire, several officers that I am aware of for certain, from his former agency yet I never saw any public postings about job openings as required.

Most of us are familiar with a former officer at this agency that quit last year to go to another agency. This officer was an exceptional officer and a huge asset to the city. Upon completing Field Training Officer School, which is huge accomplishment for an officer at that stage in his career, the Chief was overheard at a city function in 2016, by people on this very board, belittling the accomplishment in front of the officer. This type of behavior is uncalled for and shows a gross lack of respect and leadership skills that should be displayed by someone in the position of Chief of Police. To my knowledge, no action was taken against the Chief for that incident either.

That same officer was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in March of 2017, but was given no immediate compensation or benefit for the new responsibilities or function. This officer was told that no benefit or compensation would be coming for 6 months yet was still expected to complete the tasks of the position. The position was deemed "probationary" which allowed for the actions of no compensation.

Upon the resignation of that officer, it was rumored that the Chief was very disrespectful towards him to the extent of telling that officer he had "wasted time on him".

There have been at least 4 officers leave the agency in the last year and a half, many of which have conveyed actions of the Chief as either the determining factor or a contributing factor in their decision to seek employment elsewhere.

Complaints have been made both by Robertson County EMS, which have been conveyed to first responders, as well as the Robertson County Sheriff Office in regards to his lack of professionalism and respect towards the public at large.

Our Police Chief, Chief Dennis, has had an extensive documented history of berating people and complaints being made.

In our own city court, he berated a young mother in front of her crying children for asking the judge a question in relation to her pending case that was being heard in open court. He berated her to the point where the judge was so disturbed that he (the Judge) made a complaint to the City.

Yet, still, nothing has been done. I am asking that as a Board of Alderman, we address this issue by either having an official investigation, or an investigation conducted by officials outside of Coopertown.

I would like the investigation not only look into my personal experiences that led to multiple complaints, but of those of others (the Judge and our partner agencies throughout the county, former employees, etc). I believe the incidents that have occurred, both those stated tonight as well as the ones , with the interest in conserving the time of the Board, I did not have the time to mention, merit an investigation. I am asking that we have an open, fair, neutral, and official investigation into the actions of Police Chief Dennis.

I am also asking that we have an outside investigation into the Mayoral handling of the official complaints against the Chief and the lack of disciplinary action taken to address the complaints against Chief Dennis.

I would like to hearby make the motion that this board adds the Chief of Police's Misconduct to our agenda for this meeting as a non-voteable item, as well have it return on the next agenda as a voteable item.

Thank you for your time and attention as I felt that this important and pressing matter needed to be addressed to the Board of Aldermen as a whole.

- Alderman Lucas Decker