

**POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITY OF BATON ROUGE**

INTERDEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: 2/6/2018

TO: Chief Murphy Paul

FROM: Sgt. G. Bargas

SUBJECT: Grievance letter concerning transfer

Dear Chief,

I have never filed a grievance letter until now. My recent transfer made my decision necessary. Though you have been here for only a little longer than a month, I am concerned with recent changes that are being made. I do not think the criteria for who was chosen to be transferred was thoroughly vetted. I do not feel you are totally responsible for the transfers. I have been employed with BRPD since September of 1997. It aggravates me that I have to write this letter. I am not a rat, and I understand this letter could have repercussions. Those who know my clean standing in this community can vouch for me. Some of this letter is my opinion, and knowledge from other sources has been redacted for their protection. I invite you to investigate for yourself.

I was born in Baton Rouge, and I am the son of a former business owner. He was the victim of an armed robbery, was shot, and returned fire on all suspects. The way the police handled the case impressed me. The police motorcycle hooked me into the profession.

When people would ask me what I thought about you (the new chief), I would say to everyone that all was well. That was not entirely the truth. At first, I thought a new chief would be a benefit. It is really like bringing sand to the beach. The first thing that happened, after your appointment, was getting three of the people, who ran the department prior, made into newly created deputy chiefs. These are the same three who made decisions under Chief Dabadie. Even all of the secretaries are the same, keeping the status quo.

Hearing the debate over how deputy chiefs are chosen, and if they are required to take a test, can be confusing. Maybe the goal is to keep the same people in power? I do not know. There is not much precedence on that.

After Capt. Payne, there was no one was in charge of professional standards, and since Sgt. Wallace, no one was in charge of extra duty. Things were on cruise control, until Blaine Salamoni was discovered receiving administrative fees, while on administrative leave. This was an extra duty issue. A problem made known only by attorneys and the media, because no one was closely watching. After 20 years of suspension free service, I was assigned to extra duty and professional standards, in an attempt to improve officer standards, police unit maintenance, ensuring secondary employment was not abused, and to close the gap between police and the community. This is something which has not improved in my opinion, due to my quickly interrupted appointment.

1. Written Allegation of the Specific Wrongful Act and Harm Done

By not properly evaluating all classified administrative Sergeants, with documentation, for the possibility of being transferred, certain Sergeants were allowed to circumvent transfer. My removal again leaves no one directly over extra duty or professional standards, which probably aided the oversight concerning extra duty administrative fees with Blaine Salamoni.

It was explained to me that apparently after Captain Browning discovered having too many "acting Sergeants" was a civil service violation, several Sergeants had to be transferred to correct this. I found that confusing, because I had no recollection of so many Sergeants being moved for that reason. For years, the police department has been under staffed. We still are under staffed. We have had no limit to how many "acting Sergeants" there were, to my knowledge. No complaint had been mentioned besides Captain Browning's.

This decision was made by Captain Browning, who spent some of his career arresting people, as a way to justify a lucrative overtime salary, at the tax payers' expense. Feel free to review his salary, his reports, and which officers were included on those reports, over his career, to mine. I do not condone abusing court overtime. That is a result of fixed shifts, and no night court. He was recently able to get his fishing buddy an assistant position under him, and the assistant's brother a position in fleet. Not much diversity with those moves. Status quo?

2. The Statement Of The Grievance With Facts

This is the point: My transfer was made to uniform patrol, where there is a shortage. Just prior, some transfers were made away uniform patrol to administration, even though uniform patrol had shortages. Of course, some were and some were not Sergeants, which made the transfers away from uniform patrol perfect, under HR and or policy scrutiny.

I will say that after the mistakes with transfers made under Chief White, the movements are now more methodical. Other transfers have also been made. I do not think that excessive transfers constitute changing the police department. Civil service and Blue Book policy dictates what can be done at the police department, and there is not much you can change with those efforts. When people are placed in places they don't want to be in, it creates morale issues with performance.

Also, I welcome you to audit all classified Sergeants with 5 or less people under their command, and ask yourself why these people were not selected, or even included to put as many as possible on the street. This seems to be another case of uniform patrol being the dumping ground for people not in the "click".

It is my understanding that Mayor Broome wanted to reform the police department. Can you confirm that Blaine Salamoni was an alternate on the SRT team? Be advised that his dad is apparently staying over his retirement maximum, to stay on as the SRT commander. Could you look into that? Mind you, that to my knowledge, no SRT sergeants were affected by these transfers. Any change here? It doesn't appear from my vantage point.

After tension between Mayor Broome and Chief Dabadie, I think people are more curious about the transfer selection process. It has been very difficult to be questioned about my transfer. People are questioning my previous position and weighing it against other divisions like horse patrol, helicopter, DWI, full time SRT, etc. Full time SRT is mentioned because in years prior, SRT was made of guys in patrol. Having SRT in patrol can reduce response times, some more than an hour, for some SRT call outs. This also puts more people on the street. Full time SRT was brought about, to my recollection, due to the Terry Melancon shooting. SRT could have been there to assist. That is up for debate.

Sometime around 1998 or 1999 under the direction of Captain Salamoni and Joan Dipaola, the police department went from the city retirement to the state retirement, which was going to save the city some money, and offer a cost of living benefit for officers. It was explained that the savings would be passed onto the officers, with a pay raise. That never happened. Benefits have been cut since. The classes after February 2000 can speak more about that. The council has chiseled away our sick leave usage and birthday holidays. These were free benefits to me? Basic eligibility requirements have been reduced compared to mine, to maintain recruiting numbers. Instead of turning away non-viable candidates, they are taken only to quit, in lieu of termination, or get in trouble later on. I have fewer benefits now, even being hired prior to 2000.

I have had some great supervisors and some horrible ones. When I was in charge of the records division, Major Brewer was my supervisor. He was the worst supervisor I have ever had at BRPD. He was unable to properly use email, and constantly tried to catch me doing something against policy. He would become more aggravated with me when he was unable to find errors with my work. His tone was mostly rude. He is an example of a supervisor, who is staying over his original retirement date. He is making a stellar income, and refuses to retire, so junior people

cannot move up the ladder, as they should. The department could make more sergeants if their seniors would not lock up the rank and file. It is a problem for the department when officers log jam the seniority ladder for their own gain. Apparently, a Major spot (now deleted) upon retirement, creates more sergeant slots than when a captain lieutenant or sergeant retires? Could you confirm this? Too bad a junior officer is not allowed to give the supervisors a performance evaluation.

My frustration level started increasing after my assignment to the Kip Holden detail, and my departure from the traffic office, where I was assigned to solo motorcycles. I had to leave motorcycles because my family time was interfering with mandatory work assignments in the traffic office. I think I still have an issue with that. Working all of those mandatory assignments takes its toll on officers, and as a result, interaction with the public can be curt, resulting in a bad experience with the public.

3. The remedy or adjustment

I would like to ask that you grant my grievance, and if not, do not stop with me, drain the swamp. Move as many as possible to uniform patrol. The uniform patrol streets are shorthanded. Start by busting up all of the old administration, and lead by a new example. Make changes that will be impressive, even to the mayor.

There are some applicants who only apply here for training, to go on to other bigger and better agencies. It has been said that you have only taken this position as a stepping stone for future endeavors down the road. Hopefully that is a rumor and you will not require multiple deputy chiefs to assist you in running the department. I know you haven't been fully aware of all decisions made by your deputy chiefs.

I have 99 problems, but my family is not one. I do not like putting dirty laundry out there, but like any bad relationship, hopefully I can make it better for the City. People, who know me, know my good character. I live with my family in the City, the same place I work. I do have an active real estate license, and I am looking at an early retirement, to pursue real estate full time. My time at BRPD seems complete. I say this because I hope I can use you as a reference.

Thanks for your time,

Sgt. Gordon "Trey" Bargas
Third District Night Shift