

January 12, 2016

Final Public Release and Summary of the 2015 Police Investigation for SSPD

Following a reevaluation of the balancing tests for public release this is the summary released to the public reference the police investigation for the Steamboat Springs Police Department in 2015. The documentation of the balancing test is outlined in an additional document submitted by Chief Christensen.

Reports 1 and 2 have already been made public and will not be discussed here.

Reports 3 and 5 found the following:

There was a practice of asking new employees to stand up and introduce themselves and then shout at them to sit down. Many felt this was an inappropriate practice. This was introduced to the organization by the leadership. This practice is no longer happening. City policies were violated in this area.

There was a feeling that the organization was being run by fear and intimidation. There were several examples from employees, past and present, which point to this being accurate. This was a top down leadership issue. City policies were violated in this area.

The Oath of Office was changed and the officers were required to take the new oath. The only change was to add the words "Federal Laws" to the new oath. The new oath did not violate the State Constitution or City Charter. No City policies were violated.

There was a general feeling of bullying on the part of certain members of supervision. Several employees reported this was happening and was being tolerated by the administration. City policies were violated in this area.

Chief Rae did report the motor vehicle accident immediately following that accident. The accident occurred in the State of Colorado and was reported to the proper authorities. No city policies were violated in this area.

Report 4 found the following:

There was the use of sexist terminology and inappropriate comments made and tolerated by leadership. City policies were violated in this area.

There was evidence that a city employee conducted outside business while on duty for the City.

Report 6 found the following:

1. Prohibited Harassment

According to the investigator, "It is more likely than not a decade plus of gender based harassment occurred at SSPD."

2. For profit policing

As determined by the investigator, "Most officers agreed that they are never given a quota for tickets, but are asked to write tickets when appropriate."

There has been a steady decrease in tickets issued by SSPD officers from a ticket amount of 1959 in 2008 to 965 tickets in 2014.

There is no evidence that there was a culture of writing tickets to generate revenue.

No City policies violated in this area.

3. Krav Maga

The use of Krav Maga by Steamboat Springs Police Department – This is accurate, SSPD does train this form of defensive tactics. Krav Maga is recognized and accepted by Colorado's Police Officer Standards of Training (POST) as a form of defensive tactics training. POST is the training authority for all police officers in the State of Colorado.

Officers interviewed felt that the current training system is effective, but would like more opportunities to train.

No City policies violated in this area.

4. No Reward System

There is no formal reward system in place. Good performance was recognized at department meetings according to Chief Rae and Deputy Chief DeValle.

No City policies violated in this area.

5. Lawsuits

The report recommends that the lawsuits be examined and analyzed for management considerations and changes necessary.

6. Hazing Practice

The practice of having a new employee stand up and then shouting for that employee to “Shut up, and sit down” did occur on a regular basis. This practice was instituted in the early 2000s. Recommended that this practice stop.

7. Other Management Considerations and Recommendations

- Failure of administration to listen to line level personnel
- Consistency in selection processes. A feeling that the changing processes does not help officers understand how they are administered.
- Lack of training was of great concern to the officers. Staffing has been an issue.
- Discipline without a feeling of due process. Officer was suspended without pay and had not been allowed to give his side of the story.
- Concerns by civilian employees that they are not being communicated with or part of the input process for police operations.
- Implement the Lexipol policy manual
- SSPD should consider a restructuring to allow for making these changes
- SSPD needs to work and collaborate more with the City HR in recruiting and hiring.
- SSPD needs to develop a strategic plan on how they will reconnect with the community