

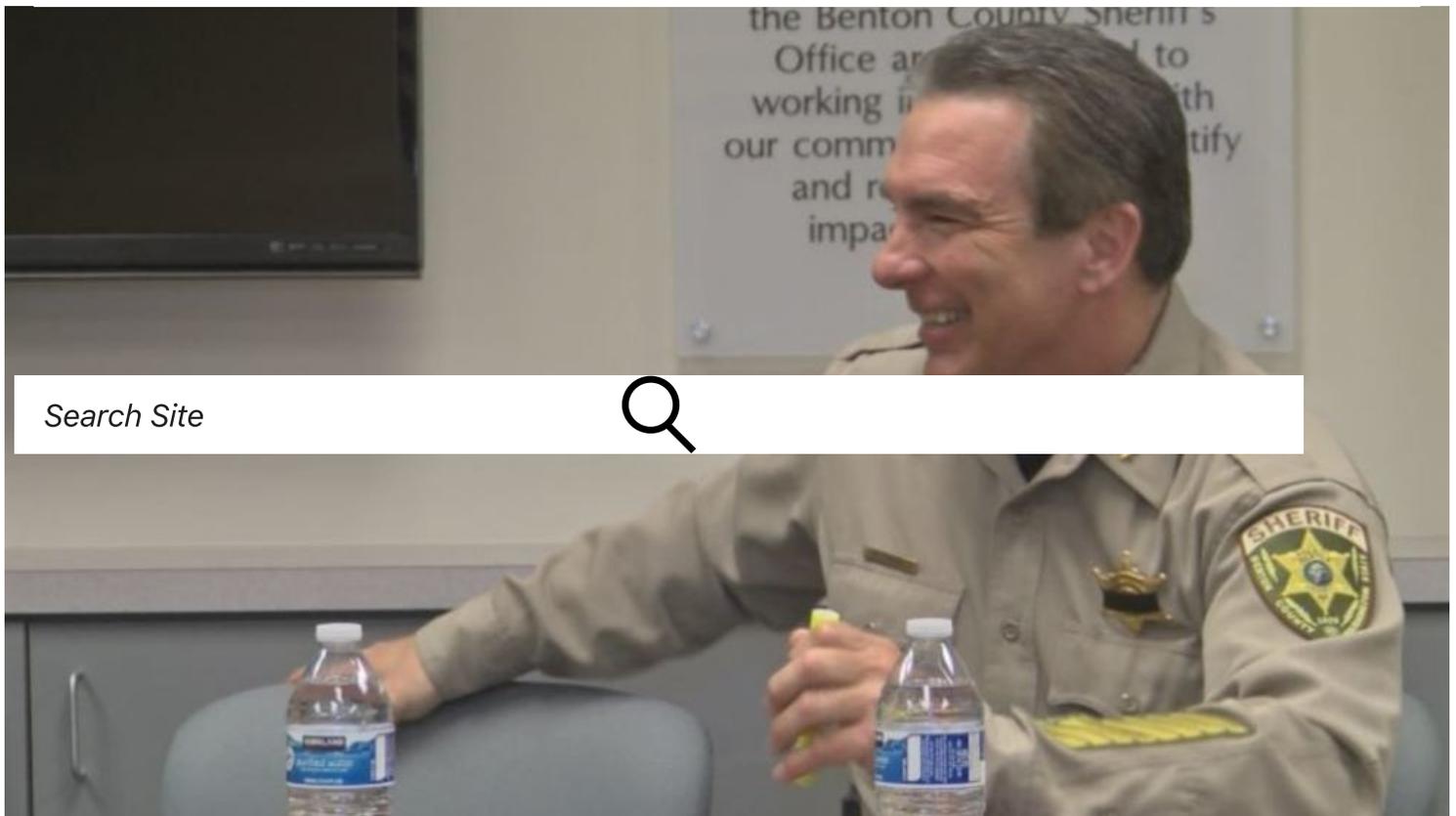
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FULL LETTER: BCSO employees send letter denouncing Sheriff Hatcher

by Megan Magensky
Sunday, February 2nd 2020

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hatcher.jpg

BENTON COUNTY, Wash. — To: Sheriff Jerry Hatcher and the Board of Benton County Commissioners

Exhibit 8

From: Benton County Deputy Sheriff's Guild

This letter is written on behalf of the Benton County Deputy Sheriff's Guild (BCDSG). The BCDSG consists of deputies, corporals, sergeants, and lieutenants whom are employed by the Benton County Sheriff's Office. This letter is to officially inform you that after an overwhelming vote of our members, we can no longer support you, Jerry Hatcher, as our Sheriff. We will not support you if you choose to seek a second term as Benton County Sheriff. The men and women of the BCDSG understand the awesome responsibility that we have as peace officers and will continue to provide the best possible law enforcement service to those who live, work, and visit our community. But we are compelled to act in response to your leadership by clearly stating why we can no longer support you.

We write this letter after much contemplation and discussion. We regret you have left us no choice but to take this action. We have attempted to bring our concerns to you during your term, yet you have chosen not to make the necessary changes. It is regretful because we are a team of dedicated professionals and taking this position goes against our nature. We also fear there will be retaliation from you, whether it be overt or subtle, and we are very concerned about the intimidation and retaliation this stance will likely bring to the guild members.

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work environment that promoted organizational and individual success. At that time our agency was well respected in the region and across the state. Deputies were happy to come to work and our culture was that of a positive and fulfilling place to work. Many of our deputies came to the Benton County Sheriff's Office from outside agencies specifically because of our reputation for being one of the best law enforcement agencies.

You have been our Sheriff for less than two years. During this short amount of time, you have destroyed the positive culture within our organization and developed a culture that can only be described as hostile and negative. We can best define you as a Tyrant. You exercise your power similar to that of an oppressive dictator. Deputies and supervisors are frustrated, and deeply saddened by your lack of both leadership and professionalism. The atmosphere in the office can only be described as depressing, stressful, and plagued with heavy negativity.

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 become increasingly worse to the point

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members of our Guild and other staff have recently retired or sought other employment earlier than they wanted. We no longer have police officers wanting to lateral to our agency like in the past. Several deputies are currently looking into the possibility of leaving Benton County. Our agency has some of the best and highly experienced law enforcement officers in the area, and we are in real jeopardy of losing them.

As with any organization, it is important to recognize the personnel who have selflessly dedicated themselves through achievement, sacrifice, and danger all in the name of public safety. Prior to you becoming Sheriff, each year we recognized those who set an example to us all. Deputy of the year, supervisor of the year, and squad of the year. We also recognized other special achievements and employee of the month. Since you became Sheriff, employee recognition has virtually come to a stop and is a factor in the declining morale of your employees. Since you have become Sheriff you have formed few if any relationships with your employees.

The posts you place on the Benton County Sheriff's Office Facebook are often self-promoting and meant to show you as a Sheriff that cares for the community. This is a complete farce; you in no way behave in that manner with your deputies or staff. Your image is the only thing you are concerned about and it shows. We see you personally taking credit for the hard work and dedication of the members of this agency. We feel that those accomplishments are achieved in

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The BCDSG is extremely disheartened with your refusal to hold yourself to the same standard of accountability as you would a deputy. Each of us, rightfully so and proudly, is required to sign an oath of office which we all swore to abide by. This oath consists of a promise to abide by the Code of Ethics, Ethical Values, Policies and Procedures, all while promoting and achieving the Mission and Vision of our office. Our General Orders/Policy and Procedure states ALL Sheriff's Office employees are expected to abide by these ethics. These ethics speak to keeping our private lives unsullied as an example to all, be exemplary, never act officiously or permit personal feelings, prejudices, or animosities to influence decisions. These are just a few of the expectations required of a law enforcement professional and the standard deputies are held to. You however have not held up your end of abiding by our Oath of Office, Code of Conduct, or Canons of Ethics.

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witness tampering. Regardless of the judicial outcome, an internal investigation would have occurred. You refused to hold yourself to the same standards and refused to have an internal investigation conducted reviewing these allegations. Upon receipt of this letter we, as a unified Guild, request an internal investigation be conducted for your violation of policy and conduct. This investigation should be done by an independent third-party law enforcement agency as to be transparent and credible in the fact-gathering process.

We feel we must take certain steps in order to address this crisis in leadership at the Benton County Sheriff's Office. From this point forward you shall not meet with any Benton County Sheriff's Office Guild member independently. If you wish to meet with any Guild member it will be done with a second member present or legal counsel. This includes all ranks from Lieutenant to the lowest ranking deputy in our office.

To be clear, we will continue to serve our community in the best way we can with the resources we have. We will continue to hold ourselves and each other to a high standard of conduct and professionalism. We will provide the service we believe each person deserves when they call upon us.

Respectfully submitted,

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