

Lexi Wingfield

From: Steve Caughey
Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2020 11:42 AM
To: Lexi Wingfield
Subject: Information

Lexi,

Thank you for talking with me over the phone a minute ago. I am following up that conversation with an email to document what I informed you of as I feel I was required to inform you, the Human resources Manager, of a conversation I had with Sheriff Hatcher about confidential or possible whistleblower information concerning Benton County Sheriff's Office Lieutenant Erik Magnuson.

On 02/05/2020, at about 0715 hrs, I was in the office and went to see Sheriff Hatcher to inform him I needed to run to the County Shops. At that time he spoke with me about the recent Deputy Sheriff Guild letter and if his command staff supports and stands by him. During this conversation Sheriff Hatcher told me he wanted to know about the issues Erik Magnuson has with him.

Back story-(On 02/04/2020, at about 0700 hrs, Sheriff Hatcher had called me into his office and had a discussion with me about the recent Guild letter. During this discussion he had asked me if Erik Magnuson, who is a Deputy Sheriffs Guild member, is the one poisoning the guild and sharing information from his command staff. I told the Sheriff that he needs to speak with Erik. The Sheriff asked why I could not tell him what was occurring with Erik and I told the Sheriff that Erik has personal issues with him and I did not feel I could share or discuss this with him and he needed to speak with Erik. That piece of the conversation ended with the Sheriff telling me the three of us should meet and talk.)

Back to the present conversation- The Sheriff asked me to tell him what issues Erik has with him. I told the Sheriff, from our conversation from yesterday, I felt could not speak with him about this and he needed to talk with Erik. The Sheriff became frustrated, told me I was his commander and it was my job to inform him of what was happening with Erik. I told the Sheriff I could not discuss this with him as I did not want to violate county policy or state law. The Sheriff sternly told me that I had one more chance to tell him what the issues were with Erik. I took this to mean that I if I refused to answer his question that I was facing discipline to include demotion or termination and that I had no choice but to provide the Sheriff with an answer. I told the Sheriff that Erik has made a complaint against him. The Sheriff asked what kind of a complaint, what could Erik have to complain against him about. I again restated that to discuss this with him could be a violation of county policy and/or state law. The Sheriff did not pursue this line of questioning any further.

There was further discussion in reference to the Sheriff's command staff and the guild letter until about 0900 hrs when the Sheriff had another meeting to attend.

Steve Caughey



COMMANDER STEVE CAUGHEY

Investigations Division Commander
Benton County Sheriff's Office
7122 W. Okanogan Place, Bldg. B
Kennewick, Washington 99336
509-735-6555