

Police Department Turmoil

Because taxpayers paid \$14,000 to have MRI study our police department, many have asked for access to the complaint signed by 10 of the 11 officers. It is as follows:

July 13, 2020,

Dear members of the Bow Board of Selectmen,

We, the members of the Bow Police Department, are writing to inform you of the serious lack of leadership and inability of Chief Margaret Lougee to run the daily operations of the Bow Police Department. Please accept this letter as a sincere effort to remedy this situation and a request for your guidance.

We are deeply passionate, dedicated, and hard-working police officers who proudly serve the Town of Bow. The police services provided to the Town of Bow are of the highest quality only because the 11 employees under Chief Lougee care deeply to make Bow the safest, community-oriented police department as possible. We know that the Board of Selectmen is likely unaware of the current condition of the Bow Police Department and may be surprised by the facts that are listed below.

We only ask that you take our concerns seriously so that the Bow Police Department and Board of Selectmen can provide the best services to the community we serve. We can assure you that however low morale has become, and disheartened the officers have become with the Chief's leadership, we will only provide the highest quality police services. We thank you in advance for your time, and we look forward to working with you in changing the direction of the police department. We share a common vision of making the Bow Police Department a safe, desirable, and well-managed police department.

List of Concerns Pertaining to Chief Margaret Lougee

The following is a list, however not all-inclusive, of concerns regarding the lack of leadership and failure of Chief Lougee to lead the Bow Police Department.

1.) Dishonesty:

- I. Honesty is the most vital attribute of any law enforcement officer. It has been discussed regularly that both officers and supervisors do not feel comfortable speaking with Chief Lougee on a one-on-one basis. Chief Lougee will not stand behind the words and commands she gives to department members. Rather than acknowledge any mistakes made or incorrect information given, she will adamantly deny ever saying what

she said. Her infamous line within the police department is “It is my work against his/hers.” As you can imagine, this is completely detrimental to morale when your Chief of Police refuses to back what she tells you.

- II. Current Bow Police Department job descriptions reflect that Lieutenants and Sergeants can issue written reprimands and discipline. The Town of Bow Personnel Plan, which the police department operates by, states that only the department head (Chief of Police) can issue discipline. This is a total contradiction to what Chief Lougee testified to at the labor board on January 11, 2018, in an effort to block the forming of a police union.

2.) Policies/Rules/Regulations

- I.) Chief Lougee selectively enforces department policies depending upon which policy has been violated and which officer violated the policy. She has shown on many occasions that rules only apply when she wants them to apply and will internally investigate (1A) a suspected policy violation as retaliation or ability to exert power over an employee. Recently, Chief Lougee instructed the investigating Lieutenant to use an outdated policy, when a new version of the policy was currently in use. This demonstrates that Chief Lougee is not familiar with her own policies.
- II.) Since she was appointed Bow Police Chief in 2016, the Bow Police Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are still not updated to a level of a functioning police department. She has removed older standing policies without informing personnel, there are currently no separate SOP's for members of the Bow Police Department in areas where we are to be held at a higher standard than other town employees, i.e. alcohol use, light duty assignment, and discipline. Policies are cut and pasted with no rhyme or reason from other police agencies, in turn creating policies that are inaccurate, incorrect and increase our liability. Chief Lougee does not provide any training on these policies and only submits them via department email to the officers. A “read receipt” that she requires does not have any indication that the employee understand or has any working knowledge of the policy. These policies are rules and regulations pertaining to the daily functions of a police officer and he has made no effort to make sure her employees understand them.
- III.) Chief Lougee has held one department training on policies since becoming the Chief of Police. In January 2020, the supervisors

provided a two hour training on specifically selected policies. One of the policies presented was the Pursuit Policy, a high-liability policy for the Town of Bow. During the question and answer portion, the Chief had no working knowledge of the policy and could not answer questions confidently. She recommended that a patrol utilize their personal cellular phone to contact a supervisor, while pursuing the vehicle, to see if the pursuit is authorized. This directly contradicts the pursuit policy. At this training she also made several other verbal changes to the pursuit policy and as of this date she has still yet to provide an updated or amended version of the policy. These issues present a tremendous level of liability against the Town of Bow.

3.) Department Needs/Issues

I.) Chief Lougee has failed to address important needs and concerns of the Bow Police Department. Most issues at the Bow Police Department would be resolved if she would identify said problems to your board and allow the Board of Selectmen an opportunity to make resolutions. Currently, the success of the Bow Police Department is completely dependent on the persistence of the supervisors and the work ethic of the officers of the Bow Police Department. When offered help, she adamantly refuses and will not accept it. Supervisors spend a great deal of time researching solutions to police department issues, but she has little appreciation for their help. Rather than accepting the help to make the police department better, she adamantly refuses and views it as an attack on her ability to do her job.

II.) Staffing:

Our department and the Town of Bow suffer from Chief Lougee's inability to appropriately represent the needs of our department. The Bow Police Department is working at the highest capacity we ever have. Calls for service, arrests, and serious calls have all increased steadily over the last 10 years. The Bow Police Department, as of this letter, has less staffing than was assigned in 2011. Officers are working more overtime, longer hours, and at a greater workload than ever. Our monthly statistics speak for themselves and are publicly posted monthly by the administrative assistant.

In addition to the reduction of law enforcement personnel, we also have one less civilian employee. The department was told in an email that by reducing the civilian employee position (Administrative Specialist 2019) that the position would be moved to hire a full time

officer in patrol. When the Chief was questioned what happened to the new officer position, she said forgot about it and would get back. As of this letter the Chief has still yet to provide an update on the position.

In 2020 the Bow Police Department has lost a full-time and a part-time officer due to resignations. Due to short staffing, the Detective and School Resource Officer (SRO) are continuously pulled from their primary duties and are required to perform the functions of patrol officer. This causes important cases being investigated by the Detective to be delayed, and the SRO spending less time at the schools. It is our understanding Chief Lougee tells this board that we have "two" detectives as she considers the newly formed Administrative Lieutenant a detective. The new Administrative Lieutenant supervises the Detective, but has a workload that does not allow her to spend time actively investigating cases.

Load Bearing Vests:

The members of the police department are greatly appreciative of this board's assistance in acquiring load bearing vests to help protect the health of our officers. Although Chief Lougee presented the vests, it is important to know the back-story of how we arrived to this point. The problem of excessive weight being carried on their assigned duty belts, causing back pain, was identified to the Chief originally with no support. The Chief's first response to the problem was saying her back has hurt her entire career due to her duty belt and she was never offered a load-bearing vest. She has also been vocal about disliking the way they look rather than seeing the value in the health benefits. Members of this department spent hundreds of dollars at chiropractors for back treatment. Their respective doctors told officers that the pain/discomfort was directly attributed to the amount of weight carried on their waist. Chief Lougee instructed officers to file worker's compensation claims against the Town of Bow, which were denied by Primex. It was not until each officer submitted a letter to Chief Lougee that she even considered bringing the issue to the Board of Selectmen. This Board fixed the issue immediately and we thank you. Officers who have been assigned load-bearing vests have noticed a dramatic difference in back pain/discomfort.

Department Restructuring:

In the summer of 2019 the supervisors brought a department-restructuring plan to Chief Lougee with the creation of a new Lieutenant and patrol Sergeant position. In September of 2019 she presented it to the police department and discussed the changes that would be made. Even though the Board of Selectmen approved the restructuring of the department, as of this letter the Chief has yet to post the Sergeant's position and/or promote anyone to the position of Sergeant.

4.) **Department Morale**

- I.) Morale is the greatest single factor of a successful Police Department. Poor morale is a reflection of poor leadership. The current state of morale at the police department is extremely low. Reasons for poor morale vary in complexity but are all contributed to the lack of leadership and accountability by Chief Lougee. During her tenure as Chief, she has failed to foster a department that utilizes a uniformed chain of command. Her dishonestly and lack of professionalism has created a dysfunctional work environment that lacks direction and focus. Important decisions about the future of the department are often made with ego and emotion rather than logic and reason. Her credibility as a Police Chief and law enforcement officer is questionable and she has lost the trust and respect of the members of Bow Police Department.
- II.) The amount of experience at the police department should be commended with several department members having served for 10+ years. Even amidst the constant degradation by the Chief, the supervisors beneath her put forth an incredible amount of effort to make this department a place which fosters positivity, productivity, and a good working environment.
- III.) The members of the Bow Police Department are proud of the reputation that we hold within the law enforcement and greater Bow community. We have a high degree of integrity and work hard to build a foundation of trust with the people we serve and the men and women we serve alongside in the law enforcement community. The members of the Bow Police Department hold a concern that Chief Lougee is a poor representative of our agency. She does not possess the skills, abilities, knowledge and professionalism we represent.

5) **Unequal Treatment**

- I.) The mission statement of the Bow Police Department is:
“The mission of the Bow Police Department is to provide the highest quality of safety services while maintaining the highest degree of courtesy and professionalism, assuring fair and equal treatment for all.”

The vision statement for the Police Department is:
“The success of the Bow Police Department is dependent on a shared vision. In order to create an environment in which our employees are proud to work, it is vital that we encourage open communication, individual responsibility, cooperation and respect among the various divisions within the department. Through this positive interaction we will uphold and promote the essence of Esprit De Corps.”

Currently neither the mission statement, nor vision statement are being upheld at the Bow Police Department. This is directly because of the lack of leadership by the Chief Lougee.

- II.) In January of 2020 Chief Lougee made a promotion to the newly created Administrative Lieutenant’s position. Even though there were three qualified applications for this position, Chief Lougee promoted the new Lieutenant without announcing the job posting, job qualifications, interviews, or any other hiring practice previously conducted for promoting within the department.
- III.) Also in January of 2020, Chief Lougee conducted a process for the position of Detective. An outside oral board was held along with an “assessment board” consisting of Chief Lougee as the evaluator. The officers who went through the process knew of no formal grading system and no ranking system was used. This has created confusion and distrust in the entire promotional process within the department.

6) **Professionalism and Communication**

- I.) Chief Lougee conducts herself amongst department members with an incredible lack of professionalism. She is passive aggressive to the point of being a bully to officers and indirectly threatens officers wanting to grieve her decision by stating said grievance would be a detriment to their career.
- II.) Communication with Chief Lougee is almost exclusively via email and she avoids meeting in person as much as possible. Her punctuation, sentence structure and grammar are so poor it inhibits effective communication within the police department. This also contributes to poor morale because at times it is difficult to decipher the

context/tone/message of her emails. The emails are disjointed, confusing and contradictory. This is very ineffective and inefficient way to communicate to department members and often read as "rants".

- III.) Due to the depletion of overtime budget, in January of 2020, Chief Lougee cancelled all police department trainings. Cancellations of training occurred prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and we have yet to meet, video conference (Zoom), or phone conference as a department since 2019. There is little to no communication from the Chief of Police to members of the police department and is a detriment to our mission to serve the Town of Bow.
- IV.) Chief Lougee consistently notates on department members performance reviews that they need to learn the "Big Picture" or "Larger Picture" of both Law Enforcement and the vision of the Bow Police Department. However, Chief Lougee fails to maintain transparency and does not educate officers on her vision for the police department. This has consistently created frustration and lowered morale amongst the patrol officers.
- V.) Following the tragic murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the public image and views have changed towards law enforcement. Chief Lougee has failed to provide any guidance or leadership for members working patrol. Members of the Bow Police pride themselves on their integrity and dedication to the Town of Bow. Chief Lougee does not provide a position of support for department members which results in low morale. Shortly after the Floyd murder, an email went out stating officers need to be careful and to be aware that officers are being targeted by displaying thin blue line stickers on their vehicles. This was sent out because officers around the country were being followed home after their shift. In the same email, Chief Lougee announced that officer bios would again start to be posed on the BPD Facebook Page, creating additional officer safety issues for both officers and their family members. These bios had originally been discontinued due to the unnecessary risk of posting officer's information and pictures on the internet.
- VI.) During a conversation with a member of this department in January 2020, Chief Lougee referred to the patrolman as "a bunch of pussies" when an officer used a sick day. This was an off-the-cuff remark but shows her unprofessionalism and disdain towards her subordinates.

7) Dereliction of Duty

- I.) Chief Lougee suffered an off-duty knee injury in June 2020 that made her unable to walk without a brace and crutches. During this time she reported to work in a golf polo shirt, cargo shorts, and sandals. While wearing these clothes she has responded to calls for service without being equipped with a radio, protective vest or firearm. While Chief Lougee was at the scene of a recent car accident on Route 3A, a tow truck driver asked the Bow officer if his chief “thought she was on vacation.” This “uniform” is a direct violation of both Town personnel policy and BPD policy, and is completely unprofessional. The Chief should also not be responding to any calls for services while she is injured and not able to provide back up assistance if needed. This is a liability to the Town of Bow, her own personal safety, and the safety of her fellow officers.

- II.) During the September 2019 350NH protest at the GSP power plant, 67 individuals were arrested. This event cost GSP thousands of dollars and required an enormous police presence involving agencies from across NH. In January 2020, a group of these individuals were charged with breach of bail for committing crimes while out on bail for the September protest. Completing the breach of bail warrants and paperwork tied up the BPD detective for an extended period of time. In March 2020, at the beginning of the Covid pandemic, Chief Lougee asked 350NH for Tyvek suits. 350NH provided some Tyvek suits, as well as leaving a box of coal on the front steps of the police department in protest. Chief Lougee’s decision to contact 350NH was embarrassing to the amount of money GSP has spent to protect their power plant, disrespectful to the amount of time BPD has spent holding these individuals accountable, and jeopardizes the current pending judicial proceedings involving those arrested at the GSP power plant.

- III.) In 2016 Chief Lougee directly took a report of a sexual assault. This sexual assault was not documented nor did Chief Lougee complete a written report of the allegation of a sexual assault having occurred. Members of this department only know about this incident because the victim has tried to reopen the case in late 2019. The suspect’s father, who happens to be a retired Law Enforcement Officer, has also told members of this department that Chief Lougee gave him her word that his son (the suspect) would not be charged. This case has been reopened and is currently being re-investigated. Chief Lougee’s actions go directly against the New Hampshire Attorney General

Office's best practices when taking the report of an alleged sexual assault. Any member of this department would expect to be terminated from employment if at any time during their career an alleged sexual assault was not properly investigated and memorialized in an official police report.

Conclusion:

In 2016, members of this department openly encouraged a then Sergeant Lougee to apply for the vacant Chief's position. This was done because we collectively felt that given her personable nature, her years of experience and her ties to the Town of Bow, that she would be change that we so desperately needed. Members of this department have wanted nothing more than to see her succeed in her position. All members of this department, regardless of rank, have made every attempt to help the Chief make this department successful. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, any attempt to help her was viewed as an attack on her ability to do her job rather than a way to move the department forward.

Members of this department have a passion to serve this town and enjoy working with each other. The best solution for this police department would be to reevaluate the needs of the police department and allow the two Lieutenants to run the day to day activities of the police department until a new Chief of Police is selected.

We appreciate your time and help in this matter. It is with great regret and fear of retaliation by the Chief in sending this letter. We look forward to working with you and we know that the members of this department and the members of the Board of Selectmen share the common goal of providing only the best to those whom we serve.

Recommendations:

- 1) New Chief of Police for the Bow Police Department.
- 2) Hire an independent company to identify the strengths, weaknesses, needs, and goals of the Bow Police Department.
- 3) Independent review of the Bow Police Department Policies and for the Town to look into accreditation by CALEA.
- 4) Board of Selectmen directly supervise the Chief of Police and meet with members of the police department on a monthly basis.

No Confidence Vote:

Below you will find the signatures of employees of the Town of Bow Police Department. This letter has been written collaboratively and is the feelings of each of the officers who have signed below.

Please accept these signatures as a majority VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE in Chief Lougee's leadership and ability to perform her job as Chief of Police for the Town of Bow Police Department.

We respectfully request that the Chief of Police be placed on administrative leave while these matters are looked into. We fear that if this is not done, it will create a hostile work environment and retaliation of personnel would follow.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lt. Scott Hayes



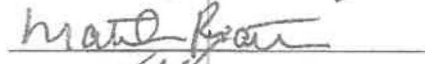
Lt. Stacey Edmunds



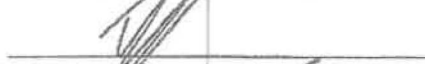
Sgt. Philip Lamy



Sgt. Matthew Pratte



Det. Tyler Coady



Ofc. Philip Goodacre



Ofc. Michael Murray



Ofc. Robert Buchanan



Ofc. Matthew LeBlanc



Ofc. David Nelson

