

Closed session of January 13, 2015
Special Board meeting

Entered into closed session at 6:57pm by motion from Nolan and 2nd from Karker with unanimous roll call vote
Chief Cupi and Officer Jason Skelton were allowed to remain during the closed session.

Trustee Coon allowed Jason Skelton to address the board acknowledgement of respect for all members of the board and all people employed by the town. Skelton also offered apologies “if Miss Cupi, over here, found our conversation disrespectful as that was not my intent”. Skelton explained his intentions of finding out why his hours had been cut and wanted to attempt to get some back. Skelton explained his understanding of the subsequent conversation getting heated when he was told about being reprimanded, as he stated he did get out of line and apologized to Cupi for that. Skelton stated that was all he had at that time and was thanked by Coon and other for his comments and then left the board room at 7:00pm.

Trustee Coon explained the reason for the closed session meeting. Coon explained that Skelton had been disrespectful to his superior during a conversation that was had at the police station on January 3, 2015 where Skelton slammed a door and was disrespectful to Chief Cupi. Coon then went on to explain his personal thoughts on Skelton and his possibility for change. Coon offered that it was not his intention to see Skelton fired over this incident and that the days off were probably enough reprimand. Coon voiced his thought on future possible training (i.e. cooling temper, following chain of command, leaving radio turned on at all times while on duty) that should be offered and commended Skelton for offering his apology.

Worlow explained an incident that had occurred when he had stopped alongside Route 136 to speak with Skelton. Worlow expressed his concern over Skelton not being aware of his presence and stated that Skelton was playing on his phone. Worlow voiced safety concerns regarding this issue. Worlow expressed his thoughts that Skelton was a young officer that probably needs more training.

Nolan voiced concerns over Skelton turning his radio off at any time during his shift.

Blackstock voiced concerns over Skelton not be aware of his surrounding while on duty and his shutting off the radio while on duty.

Karker voiced her concerns over the radio being shut off as well.

Blackstock voiced that Chief Cupi gets the final say. There was a discussion about who is allowed to “fire” someone. Blackstock went on to voice her opinion of the sincerity of Skelton’s apology. Blackstock pointed out that if Skelton is not fired he needs to be made aware that any future incidents will not be tolerated due to past complications that have previously been brought to the board (i.e. 4th of July fireworks).

Cupi pointed out the following list of incidents, and follow-up remediation that was done where applicable, of Officer Jason Skelton’s performance:

1. Struggled with performing traffic stops correctly. Remediation: A typed and laminated “cheat sheet” was created for reference during traffic stops as was a laminated list of proper police alphabet code words. Cupi explained that traffic stops are still not being performed correctly and the military alphabet code words are still being used.
2. On July 4, 2014 fireworks were allowed to be shot off after being given direct notification that they were prohibited. Remediation: Skelton was talked to about this incident during an officer meeting to which Skelton explained he did not understand Chief Cupi’s directive at said officer meeting.
3. Cupi explained an incident that occurred in July 2014 where a highly intoxicated driver had entered Casey’s “falling down” while entering. Skelton was alerted to aforementioned driver by a Casey’s employee. Cupi explained that Skelton initiated a stopped with this driver and then explained how this call was handled improperly and also pointed out that aforementioned driver was a juvenile. Cupi reported she had viewed the camera footage at Casey’s and could confirm the employee’s concerns. Cupi also explained that the in-car camera footage was reviewed to which Cupi had many concerns with the outcome of the stop.

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4. Cupi explained that on September 29, 2014 Skelton had made several comments about a fellow officer at Illinois Central College where Skelton is enrolled as a student. Cupi quoted the profane comments for the board.
5. Cupi reiterated the concerns of Mayor Worlow as Worlow stated above.
6. Skelton changes shift times without approval even after agreeing, via provided text messages, of his acceptance of a shift hour change for November 21, 2014..
7. Skelton abandoned a shift on December 20, 2014 without notifying anyone of his departure.
8. Cupi explained the phone conversation that was had between herself and Skelton on January 3, 2014 which prompted Cupi to come to the village and try to contact Skelton to meet with her and Chairman Coon at the police station. Cupi reported that after several attempts to make contact, none of which were answered, Skelton arrived at the police station at which time a conversation was had between Cupi, Coon and Skelton. Cupi voiced her concerns surrounding the entire incident. (i.e.: admission off turning the radio off while on duty, slamming doors excessively, disrespectful comments towards Cupi and fellow officer, etc)

Cupi passed out signed statements from the managers at Casey's and Bierhaus showing that Skelton had not been at their businesses at closing time, as was the agreement with both businesses, on several occasions.

Cupi passed out an inter-office memo, signed by Skelton, addressing the use of the time clock for recording hours of work. Skelton has had several days where handwritten entries were found on time cards instead of a time clock stamp.

Cupi reported that remediation training had been offered several times as had been asked of her to complete by the Police Chairman. Cupi expressed her feelings surrounding Officer Skelton and his time on the San Jose Police Department.

There was a discussion about how both businesses (Casey's & Bierhaus) could be watched at the same time with both businesses closing at the same time.

Smith voiced his concerns surrounding the apology that was offered by Skelton at the beginning of the closed session.

There was general discussions about the hiring of Officer Merritt, respect between Chief Cupi and Skelton, how hours would be filled if Skelton was to be terminated and possible candidates for an officer position. Cupi relayed her concerns over safety while on duty and voiced her fears with Skelton remaining on the police department.

Smith asked Cupi for her recommendation to which Cupi answered that she would either terminate Skelton's employment or take him to only being scheduled one day a month.

Tibbs explained that he would abstain from any vote on this matter but voiced his thoughts and opinions of Skelton.

Smith and Blackstock recommended to reservedly terminate Officer Skelton's employment immediately. Tibbs expressed thoughts were already stated. Coon, Karker and Nolan voiced hesitations over terminating Officer Skelton but agreed that since there was a concern of safety for all police officers that they would agree with above recommendation.

There was discussion about how to inform Skelton of this decision. Skelton was asked to join the closed session so he could be informed of the board's recommendation prior to the decision being made final in open session. Officer Merritt was asked to also join the closed session for safety reasons.

Skelton entered into closed session at 8:00pm where he was told of the recommendation of the board for immediate termination. Skelton questioned why. Cupi read the list of incidents that was previously read and explained to the board members. Skelton denied the allegations of derogatory comments about a fellow officer at Illinois Central College (#4) and asked if he would be allowed to quit instead of being fired. Skelton was informed that the board had made their recommendation. Skelton then left the board room at 8:08pm.

The board came out of closed session at 8:08pm due to no further business to discuss needing privacy from an Open Meeting.

Recorded by: Stacy Coon, Village Clerk-approved 2-16-15