

STATEMENT TO GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL MARCH 20, 2007

My name is Shawn Bouchie I am the Vice President for the Gloucester Police Patrolman's Association MCOP Local 344. Standing next to me is John Foote President, and Michael Williams Secretary:

Thank you Council President and fellow City Councilors for letting me take this opportunity to address some concerns over a training event which occurred on Friday evening March 16, 2007. The training was at the Gloucester Police Department outdoor firing range at the end of Forest Lane.

First; let me read to the council an excerpt taken directly from the regulations governing training at the DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY. DEVENS RESERVE FORCES TRAINING AREA (RFTA): Devens Mass.

TRAINING

CHAPTER 7. SAFETY

7-1. General. Safety is the primary concern when conducting any training at Devens RFTA. SAFETY WILL NOT BE SACRIFICED FOR THE SAKE OF REALISM. Safety is the first consideration of every soldier and civilian using Devens RFTA facilities. Safety is the primary responsibility of every leader down to the smallest element. Reference AR 385-10, AR 385-63, and DA PAM 385-63.

We understand we are not military soldiers. We are police Officers ready and willing to protect the community. We are also citizens with families who want to be given the same safety considerations when training; as are afforded to others who serve our country. We do not want to be treated like wild animals for the sake of retaliation. Even Range Control at Fort Devens shut down their range for the sake of safety.

Last Friday evening, from approximately 4:15 until 7 p.m., seven Gloucester police officers were assigned to firearms training at the outdoor firing range. A nor'easter was slamming into the City; it was cold and snowing, probably about 6 inches by the time we were done. Visibility was difficult; the wind was gusting. The conditions were, in a word, dangerous.

Don't get me wrong. My members have no problem being out when the weather is inclement if duty calls. But this was ridiculous. There is no doubt that each Police Officer at the GPD would not hesitate to risk his or her own life to save that of another. But to subject the Officers to unnecessary risks under the premise of training is indefensible. The training could have been postponed without costing the City a dime.

We were not even there to be trained to meet state standards. That can be done any time. In fact that training was just completed in October. We were there because we have dared to take on the Police Chief and his beloved Training Division. This was our reward for exercising our constitutional rights as union officials and citizens.

For months, we have been trying to communicate with the City administration over the money that is being wasted in unnecessary training and staffing, while the City keeps telling us at the bargaining table that it is in dire financial straits. Our letters have fallen on deaf ears. The GPD training continues to focus on swat-type tactical training. This in our opinion is the wrong direction to take. We would like to see the department move towards improving the quality of our neighborhoods by engaging in a community oriented style of policing.

We have tried to invoke a provision in our contract that calls for regular meetings between the Union and the Mayor as part of a Total Quality Management Program. This is designed, and I quote, “to explore methods for the improvement of the quality of the services delivered by the Police Department.” We want to improve the quality of the services we can provide to the public, but we cannot do that alone.

We call on you, the City Council, and the citizens of Gloucester, to demand accountability from your public officials. We want to do what we have sworn to do – protect and serve this community – but we cannot achieve that goal when the people we work for not only ignore us but go out of their way to get back at us. Once again the financial burden is going to fall on the Tax Payers of Gloucester to defend the Unfair Labor Practice committed upon the Union by the GPD Administration.

Respectfully,

John Foote, President

Shawn Bouchie, Vice President

Mike Williams, Secretary

Gloucester Police Patrolmen’s Association, MCOP Local 344, AFL-CIO