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## **Officers' union accuses chief of playing favorites; Second time in a month they publicly criticize their leader**

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The patrolmen's union has accused its chief, John Beaudette, of dividing the force into two camps - favorites who get easy, lucrative overtime; and others who are subjected to harsh training meted out as punishment.

As a result, morale at the station is low, union leaders contend.

To illustrate their claims of retribution by the chief, they described an order that put seven officers through a lengthy, outdoor firearms training session during last Friday night's blizzard-like conditions.

Union Vice President Shawn Bouchie told the City Council on Tuesday night that officers were "treated like wild animals" in "retaliation" for questioning Beaudette's "beloved" training, especially in "SWAT-type" tactics.

As a lieutenant before his elevation to chief by Mayor John Bell two years ago, Beaudette was the department's training director.

"It was zero degrees and minus-15 wind chill," Bouchie said, "and we were outside training that night."

With two other union officers standing with him, Bouchie read from a prepared statement. Then, in answer to questions from councilors, accused Beaudette of "taking care" of his favorites with "ample overtime."

Not counting Beaudette, there are 13 superior officers and 47 patrolmen. The department's 2007 budget is \$4.5 million.

"There are a world of problems in that department," Ward 1 Councilor Jason Grow said.

Beaudette, who was away from Gloucester on business yesterday, did not respond to written questions submitted through the department's business manager, Phil Terpos.

Bell, who was at the council session, invited the union to come to City Hall and talk out its problems with Beaudette. Steven Magoon, Bell's administrative assistant, said the union called and a meeting will be scheduled.

Bell himself has been accused of favoritism for his decision not to promote a sergeant to lieutenant. A former president of the Superior Officers Union, Sgt. John McCarthy has sued in federal court, claiming Bell violated his First Amendment rights by not promoting him in retaliation for his union activities.

The case is scheduled to go to trial in U.S. District Court in Boston next month.

This week's presentation to the council, which included claims of futile efforts to reason with the chief, marked the second airing of union complaints since the start of the year.

In January, union leaders went to the council with frustrations over fruitless contract negotiations. Among the municipal unions, only the two representing patrolmen and superior officers have failed to come to terms with the city. Both unions are working on long-expired contracts and have filed for arbitration.

The union wrote a letter to the Times on March 9 criticizing the chief's handling of Patrolman Stephen Lamberis, who was out for 17 months on paid leave before he returned to work in January.

Beaudette admitted that he alone had opposed and delayed accepting Lamberis back onto the active force after more than a year of contentious paid leave, then deigned not to speak to Lamberis once he had returned after negotiating a settlement with the mayor.

Through a marathon City Council meeting in early February on the festering Lamberis matter, it became clear that Beaudette had prolonged the impasse. He told the council he continued to believe that Lamberis was unfit to return to duty.

At meeting's end, the council went into executive session to hear a report on a fruitless internal investigation into unspecified suspicions of misbehavior by Lamberis, then agreed to pay Lamberis \$25,000 for his promise to drop possible legal actions against the city and return to work.

Councilor Alphonse Swekla responded to the union presentation Tuesday with concern.

"The word 'retaliation' hit me - to get even," he said. "I hope we're not in a situation where we cannot operate properly. One side or the other, never the twain shall meet. How can we get rid of that?"

Grow was highly critical of the department based on the revelations emanating from the public effort to tie up the loose ends of the Beaudette-centered clash with Lamberis, who began filing grievances against his treatment almost as soon as he was taken back to active service.

In an interview yesterday, Grow said the union presentation suggested that "there's a cliquishness (in the department) that doesn't lend itself to a healthy environment for public safety. I fully intend to support a full (independent) public safety audit."

An independent examination of the police and fire departments has been considered a high priority by the council, which last year decided first to have the Department of Public Works analyzed. The final report on that department is expected from the independent consulting firm within days.

Grow cautioned against quick conclusions.

"I'm not willing to take on face value every complaint coming out now," he said. "Every slight is subject to being magnified."

In a written response to questions, the union said it "can show that the chief's top priority since taking command has been to reward his friends and punish his enemies."

It said his unwillingness to postpone the outdoor firearms training in spite of the hash conditions "indicates a retaliatory attack on the union."