

Letter: Union criticizes chief's handling of Lamberis

To the editor:

Apparently the city of Gloucester and police Chief John Beaudette believe they have not wasted enough taxpayer money in their treatment of Officer Stephen Lamberis. The city recently settled a lengthy dispute with Officer Lamberis that arose, in part, from the chief's placement of Officer Lamberis on paid leave. This paid leave lasted 17 months. Under the terms of the settlement, Officer Lamberis never lost a single day's pay. Moreover, the city cut Officer Lamberis a check for \$25,000.

The Gloucester Police Patrolmen's Association, MCOP Local 342, hoped that this costly settlement would encourage the city to think twice before mistreating Officer Lamberis. Instead, the city and Chief Beaudette are acting like sore winners, as shown by the recent editorial, "Patrolman's case exposes fine print of contract."

They would rather violate Officer Lamberis' rights than honor the terms of their agreements with the union. While the GPPA hoped the city would come to its senses during private bargaining sessions, Chief Beaudette's public criticism of the union's efforts to enforce written agreements has forced us to expose the city's expensive mistreatment of Officer Lamberis.

The four grievances are as follows:

- 1. The city's denial of EMT overtime pay.** A neutral arbitrator recently agreed that the city violated its agreement with the union when it refused to pay for EMT training of our union president. The arbitrator also credited the union's claim that Chief Beaudette's contract violation was motivated by his hostility to union leaders.
- 2. The city's retaliatory work assignment.** Soon after Chief Beaudette restored Officer Lamberis to full duty, a designee of the chief reassigned Officer Lamberis on one shift just so Officer Lamberis would lose street supervisor pay. Instead of paying Officer Lamberis the measly \$30 or so as required under the union contract, the city prefers to waste more taxpayer money and time to defend blatant retaliation.
- 3. The city's denial of paid leave guaranteed by the contract.** Our agreement with the city requires it to provide certain benefits whether or not the officer is on paid leave. You may disagree with the merits of this particular contract or you may even have changed your mind about these provisions.

Chief Beaudette, after all, negotiated many of these "suffocating work rules" when he was union president. And while the chief made extensive use of right provided under the contract to swap shifts, he unilaterally eliminated this benefit without negotiations. Still, the city can not use its 20/20 hindsight to back out of deal.

- 4. The city's reassignment of Officer Lamberis to ensure that he will be disciplined.** Our contract, like many police contracts, emphasizes seniority in the assignment of shifts. Instead of honoring Officer Lamberis' service, Chief Beaudette reassigned him.

The chief told us that he did this because he felt that Officer Lamberis was not getting enough discipline from his superiors. In other words, he reassigned Officer Lamberis for the express purpose of increasing discipline.

This retaliatory reassignment does not merely harm the city treasury, it jeopardizes the level of police protection provided to Gloucester residents. In order to achieve his goal of disciplining Officer Lamberis, the chief reduced the number of police officers on one shift and increased the number on a shift that already has the recommended number of officers.

Chief Beaudette is of the opinion that these grievances are without merit. Before the Gloucester Daily Times and residents rely on the legal opinion of a non-attorney, ask yourself how much Chief Beaudette cost city taxpayers the last time he defended his treatment of Officer Lamberis. Enough is enough. Gloucester residents and police officers cannot afford to subsidize another witch hunt by Chief Beaudette.

Jack Foote, president

Shawn Bouchie, vice president

Mike Williams, secretary

David Quinn, treasurer

Gloucester Police Patrolmen's Association