

Brady Lake police chief's criminal history under scrutiny

By Dave O'Brien | staff writer Published: April 19, 2014 4:00AM

An investigation into how a background check into the Brady Lake police chief failed to turn up a misdemeanor criminal conviction for an incident in Stark County is continuing..

Brady Lake Mayor Hal Lehman said an initial background check on Police Chief John Marra by the village's insurance company "came back good." He said Marra was certified as a police officer in the state of Ohio by the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy and that he also served in the U.S. Air Force.

Marra, 37 and a resident of Springfield Township in Summit County, worked for Uniontown police in Stark County from 2005 until he resigned. The resignation came after Marra pleaded no contest to dereliction of duty, a second-degree misdemeanor.

Marra was charged in Stark County Municipal Court with engaging in a relationship with a 16-year-old girl while both he and she were working -- Marra on duty and the teen at a Uniontown fast food restaurant, according to court documents.

The incidents included "kissing, fondling and exchanging inappropriate text messages" with the teen while on duty as a reserve police officer, according to court records.

Following Marra's plea, Judge John Poulos found him guilty of the charge on May 1, 2008, and sentenced Marra to two years probation and 100 hours of community service. He also was ordered not to have contact with the girl or her family and to resign from the Uniontown police by May 29, 2008.

Marra did not return a phone message seeking comment.

Marra joined the Brady Lake Police Department in 2010, Lehman said. He was appointed interim police chief after Dave Kinney retired in December, and village council confirmed his full-time appointment as chief on March 17.

Hiring new officers is left up to the police chief, who recommends them to Lehman and village council, the mayor said. He said his own investigation into Marra is "not done," but "there could be changes coming up, it depends on what I can find out."

"The police chief does the interview," he said. "All I do is swear him in."

Lehman estimated that it could be a "couple weeks" before the investigation is wrapped up.

"As soon as I can get the info I need, council will know and we'll make a decision whether to let (the

appointment) stand or make a different decision," he said.

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