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Memo warned Cleveland officers about dating minors, snorting drugs, porn

by Judy Walton

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Warnings to certain Cleveland, Tenn., police officers against “dating minors, porn on city-owned phones, consumption of alcoholic beverages while off-duty, snorting crushed pills [and] oral sex in public” in May 2008, didn’t include enough specifics to warrant an investigation, the city’s police chief says.

Chief Wes Snyder and his top assistant this week have denied they failed to timely investigate allegations that some officers were involved in prescription pill abuse and sex with underage girls.

Now an internal police memo from May 29, 2008, raises questions about how hard police brass tried to find out what their officers were doing.

Snyder still insists there wasn’t enough information to begin an investigation.

“We had no victims, no proof to act on,” Snyder said in a email Friday after the Times Free Press sent him a copy of the memo.

Snyder and others have said top police in Cleveland didn’t know whether allegations of drug abuse and sex with minors were true before an officer was shot and wounded by another officer at a pill party in December 2008. An investigation into the shooting brought in the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and led to the indictment of two officers on charges of having sex with 14- and 16-year-old girls.

But the memo that turned up in the internal affairs investigation of the shooting indicates police brass had some fairly specific information on possible misconduct.

The memo by Assistant Chief Gary Hicks, on Cleveland Police Department stationery, detailed a meeting that Hicks conducted for officers Jon Hammons, Bill Higdon and Thomas. Officer Dennis Hughes was asked to attend but was absent.

According to the memo, the officers’ supervisors, Sgt. Matt Jenkins, Lt. Danny Chastain, Lt. Steve Tyson and Lt. Lamar Anderson, also were present, along with police Capt. Wesley Dilbeck, Capt. Tommy McClain and Cleveland Personnel Director Jeff Davis.

According to the memo, “No accusations were made; however, the officers were warned about



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http://www.timesfreepress.com/news/2011/dec/02/memo-warned-cleveland-officers-about-dating-minors/

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unbecoming and unacceptable behavior including, but not limited to, dating minors, porn on City-owned phones, consumption of alcoholic beverages while off-duty, snorting crushed pills, oral sex in public and running from other law enforcement agencies."

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about Judy Walton...

Judy Walton has worked 25 years at the Chattanooga Times and the Times Free Press as an editor and reporter focusing on government coverage and investigations. At various times she has been an assistant metro editor, region reporter and editor, county government reporter, government-beat team leader, features editor and page designer. Originally from California, Walton was brought up in a military family and attended a dozen schools across the country. She earned a journalism degree ...

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elvisd said...

I've lived in this area for a few years now and it seems there's always sordid stuff comes out of Cleveland. It's like every month there's some child porn perv, a teacher messing with a student, some cop up to weirdness, etc. What is it with that town?

December 2, 2011 at 9:05 p.m.

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lookinfour said...

Are you kidding me? Read the memo regarding the meeting the Assistant Chief had with his police personnel. This is a DEFINITE COVER UP and can not be explained any other way. Four of the activities he warned his police officers not to do are actual criminal acts, not just administrative policy violations. The activities are specific crimes that the Chief didn't just dream up, they had to come from somewhere. The chiefs act like all they had were just rumors so there was nothing they could do. Yes there is. You do what a good police leader is supposed to do. You investigate and you chase that rumor down, to the source. If he had information that ANY of his **police staff were doing drugs, raping teenage girls, having sex in their patrol cars, or playing chicken with other law enforcement agencies** that calls for an immediate investigation, not a broadcasted warning not to do this anymore. ARE YOU KIDDING ME. Every one of these top officials in that police department need to go immediately. This is a complete cover up. These are the people enforcing the law? This is about as disgusting of a cover up as there is up in Pennsylvania.

December 2, 2011 at 10:20 p.m.

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sage1 said...

"the officers were warned about unbecoming and unacceptable behavior including, but not limited to, dating minors, porn on City-owned phones, consumption of alcoholic beverages while off-duty, snorting crushed pills, oral sex in public and running from other law enforcement agencies."

Wait a minute....You mean to tell me that a warning had to be issued to police officers about these types of illegal acts? The need for that warning to be made to adult police officers, sworn to uphold the law, is in and of itself, absolutely asinine. They did not need a warning. They needed their walking papers at the very least. If these acts had been committed, then they needed to be arrested on the spot.

December 2, 2011 at 10:44 p.m.

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