

City police officer dismissed amid allegations of sexting with student

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A Cynthiana police officer and Explorer program leader has been fired following an internal investigation.

According to documents obtained through an open records request, Joe Warden was terminated Tuesday, Sept. 23, for allegedly sexting with a Harrison County student.

Superintendent Andy Dotson notified Warden by letter on Sept. 8 that he was no longer permitted on any school property. Failure to comply would result in charges being brought against Warden.

Safety commissioner Gary Brunker notified Warden that he was being suspended in a hand-delivered letter dated Sept. 9.

Brunker's letter stated that Warden was suspended without pay and that official action would occur within 20 days.

The commissioner stated that an internal investigation and a Kentucky State Police investigation "substantiated that on or about July 30, 2014, and Aug. 22, 2014, and on other occasions ... [Warden] engaged in conduct which violates the Personnel Policies and Procedures of the City of Cynthiana as well as the Rules and Regulations of the Cynthiana Police Department by sending inappropriate and sexually explicit text messages to a minor female. This conduct occurred both while you were on duty and off duty."

Brunker further explained that the violations of the city's personnel policies are described to include immoral or improper conduct and activities, either on duty or off duty, that discredit the individual or organization.

Likewise, the city's rules and regulations require all officers to refrain from any act or behavior which violates public morals or the common sense of the community and requires all officers to behave in a manner that does not bring discredit to the agency or the officer.

Warden was advised of his right to request a hearing with the city commission and that he needed to do so before Sept. 16.

No hearing was requested and Warden was terminated at the Sept. 23 city commission meeting following a brief closed session for discussion of a personnel matter.

He was also advised that he was banned from city property other than to turn over city-owned property and collect his pay check.

The Kentucky State Police is continuing its investigation. No charges had been filed as of press time.

Warden was hired as a police officer recruit in 2008. He began training in November 2008.

Warden was suspended without pay for 16 days in March 2010 after he collided with another vehicle when he failed to stop at an intersection while responding to an emergency call.