

Chippewa County Sheriff's Office

Travis Hakes, Sheriff

Curt Dutton, Chief Deputy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATEMENT OF CHIPPEWA COUNTY SHERIFF TRAVIS HAKES

October 5, 2023

Several issues have been raised by the allegations of the so-called investigative report recently provided to me in redacted form when it was also released to the public. I have also released to the public my responses to the report. I realize that the report and my responses are lengthy, and unfortunately the report contains many inaccurate statements and innuendos that have been exploited by some politicians for their own agendas. I take this opportunity to set the record straight as to several of the sections of the report. The fact that I do not address all of them does not mean that matters not discussed are accurate, but only means the report is so full of inaccuracies there is simply not time nor space to address them all. Please consider the following:

1. No specific, written formal complaint was or has ever been filed against me by the former adult employee referenced in the report. While I did speak with county representatives generally about the matter it was always a moving target and as such difficult to respond to. The proof that there has never been such a complaint is found in the fact that not even a redacted version of one was provided to the public or to me when the report was released.
2. Contrary to the derogatory implications of the report, no sexually explicit photos or solicitations were ever sent by me on my phone to anyone, including the adult who once was an employee of Chippewa County. Proof that none exists is found in the fact that not even a redacted version of such items is included in the released report and its exhibits.
3. Since I was sworn in as sheriff, I have not had a single real estate transaction with any member of the sheriff's office or any county employee, and if any have asked me about real estate, I have offered to provide them free help in finding a realtor.
4. Prior to being sworn in as sheriff, like many peace officers, I did off-duty work and had side businesses to help provide for my family. Since being sworn in as sheriff I have had little time or interest in doing them, and my expected gross income for 2023 will be significantly less than it was in 2022. I did not run for sheriff for the money or glory of the title but to serve the public. That has not and will not change.

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5. Any sale of items such as coffee mugs or knives to the staff of the sheriff's office since I became sheriff have actually been at a financial loss to me and I have not profited a single dime from those few sales.

6. There was no conflict of interest in how the Sheriff's Office acquired needed equipment in the form of customized rifles, and I made no money on their acquisition. This equipment was so important for our office to have that I was prepared to pay \$4,800 of my personal money if necessary to acquire it, which I could legally do as a federally licensed firearms dealer and as a donation to the Sheriff's Office. Fortunately, or perhaps because of my direct involvement as sheriff, we were able to get the rifles in an expedited manner and my donation was not needed.

7. A sheriff does not get paid by the hour and work a set shift but is on duty 24/7/365, so any discussion about me working shifts, being in the office or not being in the office, or where you might find me in the county simply demonstrates a lack of understanding of what a sheriff does or worse yet a conscious attempt to present a derogatory image of me for political reasons. I do not get a day off, and even when I take time to be with my family modern technology allows me to stay in touch with my office. For example, I once approved a time sensitive promotion of a staff member while on a family outing.

8. Chippewa County is a venue for concert events that bring in extensive revenues to our local businesses and economy. I fully support our business community and I also want to keep our citizens and concert goers safe at the least possible cost to the taxpayers. Criticism that I entered into a "contract" for cab services to take people from Rock Fest are simply not true. I conferred with several sources on how to deal with evicted concert goers to come up with a way to avoid taking them to jail and giving them an arrest record for simply being drunk, while also not wasting deputy time being a cab driver or a babysitter. The result, which some have called a "contract" did not spend a dime of tax money and the entire bill of about \$75.00 was paid by the concert promoter. This was a creative public and private partnership that kept everyone safe at no cost to taxpayers and helped our local economy by providing a safe concert environment. This is what "community policing" is all about.

9. It is correct that I declined to be interviewed by attorney Hall. I elected not to do so after she made it clear that her intent was to question me about official sheriff office matters far removed from the original purpose she was retained with tax dollars to investigate. She apparently was directed by county officials to explore matters over which administration has no authority, and therefore that would simply waste tax dollars and be used for a set agenda to develop negative information about me. The report that was issued demonstrates that my perceptions were accurate. I was further advised by some people who had been interviewed that her approach was hostile, confrontational and in search of negative information. At no time have I declined to work

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directly with county administration, human resources or the county board regarding the matter that was the starting cause of this investigation.

10. Implications that how a threat to the courts was handled that implies improper response could not be further from the truth. The specifics of the multi-layer approach that was used is something I will not disclose, lest it become a guide for future domestic terrorists that seek to do harm to our courthouse or the court. I will simply state there was a coordinated response involving many law enforcement entities and the fact nothing bad happened showed that what we did worked. The fact that some people that were interviewed did not know of the security plan put into place only shows that security plans are often discussed on a need-to-know basis, and those people simply did not need to know.

11. Allegations concerning a pursuit in which I was involved that imply fault on my actions are equally misplaced. If one reviews the facts and written report that was generated with a trained eye of an experienced officer, that trained eye would reveal the propriety of my actions on that date in dealing with this potentially dangerous suspect and the fact my actions were consistent with state pursuit guidelines. This pursuit was widely reported on, as it resulted in two of our patrol vehicles being damaged, and the pursuit went across the entire county. Had another member of this office done what I did they would not be subject to criticism or discipline by me or my office.

12. This report incorrectly depicts that I treated a single employee differently than the rest of our staff. Media reports suggest that I invited only a single employee to certain events, when all employees were invited. In fact, when our Office went to mourn the losses of fellow Law Enforcement, I personally contacted the Holcombe School District bus company and offered to pay for a bus to transport of our members at my own expense. The bus company donated the transportation. The "investigator" in fact interviewed people who provided information such as this, but she knowingly omitted it from her "report" to perpetuate the idea of me favoring a single employee.

The taxpayers have spent an untold amount of money to pay for what appears to be a politically motivated and result-oriented report that contains inaccurate and incomplete information that appears to be written with the intent to maximize any hint or innuendo of misconduct. I will not comment on nor complain about my treatment, as I well knew this type of action could happen when I swore to uphold the constitution and protect the people of Chippewa County. I am saddened because our citizens deserve better from county officials and their agents. Any time I am forced to choose between we the people or we the government, I will always choose the people I took an oath to protect.