

Tempe Police Chief Sylvia Moir

Communication to City Manager Andrew Ching and Tempe City Council

Nov. 11, 2018

Recently, an anonymous author emailed the City Council and local media alleging various infractions by me or others during my service in Tempe. I reject the assertions in the letter as a combination of simply misinformed, outright false and inflammatory. Sadly, many also display barely-concealed sexism and discrimination.

Below are my thoughts on each category of assertion:

Favoritism of female employees

I will never hide or apologize for my commitment to equal access and opportunity for all employees, regardless of class, gender, classification, race or any other factor. Believing in this principle does not equate to favoritism. Our organization promotes those who are most ready for promotion and right for the job – period. This allegation is offensive and shows a gender bias that I sincerely hope we can rid from our department specifically and the police profession broadly.

Off-hours activity during city travel

During a recent out-of-state trip to a professional conference, several female employees – not those named in the emails – did visit an establishment where topless dancing occurs. This occurred during the off-hours of the conference. Again, let me state that the named employees were not those in attendance, so any repetition of the names in the email would be highly inappropriate. The employees reportedly left the establishment after 20 minutes, upon feeling that the activity was inappropriate.

I do not condone this activity. I have personal feelings about these establishments and believe that they objectify women. I was not in attendance, though I was an attendee of this particular conference. Despite my belief that it equates to a very poor choice, what our officers did is not a violation of policy in either the police department or the city. According to HR rules, city employees receive a daily per diem in advance of their trips and what they do with it is not regulated, as long as it is spent on legal activities. I strongly discourage this type of activity on work trips in the future and will ensure this is conveyed widely in the department and to the individuals involved.

Amount of travel

I believe that in-state and out-of-state conferences and committee service make me a better chief. They provide real-world opportunities to learn from others and continuously improve my skills, and I bring that wisdom home for the benefit of our department and residents.

Historically, I often decline a daily per diem and/or transportation in order to decrease costs for the city. Frequently, my conference admission and travel are sponsored by the law enforcement group hosting the conference. Anecdotally, I am aware that a level of travel similar to what mine has been throughout my career as a chief is not uncommon.

Succession planning within our department is vitally important to me. We must bring along the next generation of police leaders for Tempe. In that spirit, I have been and will continue to increasingly delegate learning opportunities to those in my command and elsewhere in the organization. And I have empowered Assistant Chiefs, Commanders and Bureau Managers with managing their respective training budgets according to the needs of their groups.

Finally on the topic of travel, I believe that appropriate out-of-state training opportunities can and do bring units together and refine their skills. We have highly skilled units like motor officers that rely on team cohesion and trust.

I am disappointed in the avenue chosen to report alleged issues with the department. As Chief, I have an open door, as do all of our Assistant Chiefs and supervisors. We cultivate an environment of accountability and integrity, and there should be no hesitation about bringing concerns forward. Only then can we solve issues quickly and positively so that we can get back to the work we do best – protecting Tempe community members. I remain deeply committed to that work and to the City of Tempe.