



**PIMA COUNTY  
LAW ENFORCEMENT MERIT SYSTEM COUNCIL  
MINUTES OF January 9, 2020**

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The Pima County Merit System Commission met at the Human Resources Conference Room at 150 W. Congress Street, Tucson, Arizona, on January 9, 2020.

The selected Commission members present: John Fink, Chair; David Freund and Michael Hellon.

All persons in attendance were asked to state their names for the record.

Barry Corey	Counsel for the Commission/Council
Dan Jurkowitz	Deputy County Attorney for the Respondent
Lenora Anderson	Pima County Attorney's Office
Capt. Harold Janes	Department Representative, Pima County Sheriff
Mike Storie	Attorney for the Appellant
Lt. Joseph Cameron	Appellant
Aurora Hernandez	Recording Secretary, Human Resources

The Open Meeting of the Pima County Merit System Commission was called to order by John Fink at 9:00 a.m.

**Item B.** Pledge of Allegiance

**Continuance of Joseph Cameron v. Pima County Sheriff's Department.**

Mr. Fink stated this is the continuation of the Joseph Cameron hearing and asked if there were any preliminary matters? Mr. Storie detailed the avoidance of Chief Woolridge to attend the hearing. Mr. Jurkowitz countered and stated Chief Woolridge attended one hearing and that he is out for medical reasons. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Corey stated that if Chief Woolridge testimony is a critical element for the Appellant and if the Council finds that to be true and the rule says because some or all of the charges were not proven to the satisfaction of the Council. The Council could over rule the decision. Discussion ensued.

The Commission recessed for a break at 9:50 a.m. and reconvened at 9:51 a.m.

Appellant's First Witness: Russell Ponzio, retired, was sworn in by Barry Corey, Counsel to the Commission, he provided testimony in this hearing.

Capt. Ponzio explained the process of investigations. Serious rule violations and anything that can result in loss of pay or loss of time issues are typically investigated by Internal Affairs.

Chief Gwaltney left and Chief Woolridge became his superior. In two and half months Chief Woolridge ordered him four or five times to investigate issues that involved Lt. Cameron and it should have been directed to Internal Affairs. Capt. Ponzio investigated the issues, wrote his recommendations and submit them to Chief Woolridge. He never received any feedback from Chief Woolridge. It was Capt. Ponzio's recommendation that most of Lt. Cameron's infractions did not occur. When there was an infraction he was ordered not to discipline Lt. Cameron. Capt. Ponzio was asked who saw the Letter of Reprimand displayed and he responded only himself and Chief Woolridge. The Letter of Reprimand wasn't on display; it was on the desk.

Chief Woolridge issued a Letter of Reprimand to Capt. Ponzio for failure to supervise Lt. Cameron and not disciplining Lt. Cameron for various allegations that were bought against him. The Letter of Reprimand included issues that dated back to when Chief Gwaltney was his direct supervisor. Capt. Ponzio filed a grievance and it was later changed to a Letter of Counseling.

Mr. Storie asked if Commission Deputies, the lowest rank, are subject to orders from Correction Commanders. Capt. Ponzio responded no, it is two different class codes of employee. Mr. Storie asked if Lt. Cameron was required to obey orders from a Non-Commissioned Captain. Capt. Ponzio stated no.

Mr. Fink expanded on the topic and briefly explained the Correction Officer Conrad situation. Capt. Ponzio stated in that situation it was a gray area because he still held his rank as a Commissioned Lieutenant, he was acting as a representative, and it depended on whether or not the order was a direct order or not. Discussion ensued.

The Commission recessed for lunch at 11:47 a.m. and reconvened at 1:16 p.m.

Mr. Jurkowitz asked if the Office of Professional Standards record interviews and Capt. Ponzio stated they do record their interviews and criminal investigations are also recorded. Discussion of recording ensued.

Mr. Fink excused Capt. Ponzio and informed him that he was subject to recall.

Mr. Storie stated Chief Woolridge is involved in everything, he maintained pressure to discipline Lt. Cameron and he disciplined Capt. Ponzio for not disciplining Lt. Cameron. Mr. Hellon inferred from Mr. Storie statements that Lt. Cameron has been unfairly targeted by Command Staff and disciplined for things that other people are not disciplined for and the things he was disciplined for; he should not have been disciplined for. Mr. Storie agreed. Discussion ensued.

The Commission recessed for a break at 2:18 p.m. and reconvened at 2:31 p.m.

Lt. Cameron was sworn in previously and was reminded of his oath. He provided a brief work history of his employment with Pima County Sheriff's Department.

Lt. Cameron described his Letter of Reprimand, it was approximately 24 inches wide with 4, 8 1/2 inch pages on green matting with a gold frame and displayed on the wall. It was well known by Command staff that it was displayed and sometimes they would make a comment when they met in his office. Lt. Cameron knew of others within the Department that had their Letter of Reprimand displayed.

Lt. Cameron eventually took the display down at the direction Capt. Ponzio. Capt. Ponzio agreed he could place the display in the trunk that was in his office. The one time he pulled it out was when he was cleaning and rearranging things. He intended to put the display back in the trunk but he was intermittently going in and out of his office. He wasn't aware Chief Wooldridge had been in his office. He stated his office is across the parking lot in the Annex building and Chief Woolridge office was in the main building. Discussion ensued.

Lt. Cameron stated he has been involved with the Union since 1996 and he provided a brief history and his involvement with the Union. He's been a representative for other union members for 35+ years. It's been his practice to record the meetings and it was always accepted. He said the philosophy of the Department, prior to the Conrad incident, was to record because it was transparent, nobody has a foggy memory, nobody can make things up. It's in the tape. They tape, we tape.

Lt. Cameron stated at the Conrad pre-action meeting he was surprised and stunned when the Correction Captain refused to be recorded. When Lt. Cameron did not comply, he was told to leave the meeting and he did not leave because he did not take it as an order. Discussion about Commissioned Officers are not required to follow the direction of Correction Commanders ensued.

Mr. Jurkowitz asked how long the Letter of Reprimand was out the second time. Lt. Cameron stated a little over a day. It was on a table in his office, not visible from the door, and a person would have to walk to the table then turn their head to see the display.

Lt. Cameron stated the Letter of Reprimand was displayed for him. Before he had the document framed he searched the Rules and Regulations to ensure it wasn't permitted. Mr. Jurkowitz submitted a rebuttal Exhibit 25 which is the definition of display from the online Dictionary.com. Mr. Fink admitted the Exhibit and stated the Commissioners can give whatever weight to they determine.

Mr. Jurkowitz asked if recording an individual was legal and ethical. Mr. Storie stated this was taking in facts that were not in evidence and currently it is illegal. Lt. Cameron stated they are taught from the academy that if you believe something is unethical, you don't do it. They are taught to be independent thinkers and critical thinkers. If you think it is unethical, you don't do it. Lt. Cameron believed the rule was unethical. Discussion ensued.

Lt. Cameron explained the Letter of Reprimand was a reminder to keep doing the right thing. The Sheriff and the rest of the Chief don't like him and he doesn't like them. They tried to scare him into silence and to look at it kept him going.

Lt. Cameron described his thought process for determining if a rule was unethical. Why is the rule in place? How re they using this rule to heart people and are they across the board with it? His experience is a rule is applied to an individual depending on who you are and what you did.

Lt. Cameron was vaguely familiar with the rule that pertained to recording. When he was told he could not record it made no sense to him and he was surprised. Discussion about recording ensued.

All parties requested to listen to Sheriff Napier's testimony pertaining to disobeying orders. Mr. Storie stated he would find the recording and suggested a break.

The Commission recessed for a break at 3:50 p.m. and reconvened at 4:09 p.m.

Mr. Storie found the recording and it was played for everyone. Mr. Storie interpretation of Sheriff Napier's testimony starts by saying ordered not to record on 2 separate occasions. Not an actual order. Those were his words, "not an actual order". Discussion ensued.

Mr. Fink stated closing arguments would begin the next day and a maximum of 30 minutes for each side.

Mr. Fink adjourned the meeting at 4:24 p.m.

The digital recording of the official proceedings and the minutes were prepared by the Recording Secretary.

Minutes approved by /s/ Mike Hellon on May 10, 2022.