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July 13, 2021

Bryan Montgomery, City Manager
Indio City Hall
100 Civic Center Dr.
Indio, CA 92201

RE: Indio Police Command Unit's Vote of "NO CONFIDENCE" in IPD Chief Michael Washburn, and Assistant Chiefs Shaefer and Tully

Dear Mr. City Manager:

This communication is intended to inform you of the results of a recent measure passed by the voting membership of the Indio Police Command Unit (IPCU).

With all members responding, fully 77% of Indio Police Department Lieutenants and Sergeants have voted to adopt a position of "No Confidence" in the continued tenure of Chief Mike Washburn. By a smaller majority, our members have also expressed "No Confidence" in Chief Washburn's handpicked subordinates, Assistant Chief Shaefer and Assistant Chief Tully.

This was not an action undertaken without appropriate deliberation and has nothing to do with the various personalities involved. It was also certainly not a rush to judgment. The IPCU has had almost 5 years to reach the conclusion that these 3 individuals lack the ability and character to continue in leadership positions in the Indio Police Department.

Nor is the conclusion manifested by and through this vote some kind of reflection of the societal tensions seen in many "Big City" police agencies since the George Floyd incident over a year ago. We have seen precious little of that sentiment in Indio, and hopefully, it will remain that way as the working officers enjoy tremendous support from this fine community. This organizational expression of discontent has been created by nothing less than an abject failure of character and leadership at the senior executive staff level of the Indio Police Department.

Above all else, peace officers must have integrity and must tell the truth, particularly when under oath. An objective review of the transcripts in a recent departmental disciplinary arbitration proceeding demonstrates that Washburn and Shaefer do not meet that standard.

Incidentally, the eventual outcome of that arbitration is not the point. Those two police managers testified falsely about certain procedural facts involved in the underlying investigation of the incident upon which that discipline was based. In addition to their dishonesty, their actions have demonstrated a distinct lack of competence as it relates to both personnel and disciplinary matters.

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If any other member of the IPD had offered such obviously false testimony back in January of this year, he or she would have almost instantly been placed on administrative leave. To date, no action has been taken other than to start, and then suspend, an inquiry into Washburn and Shaefer's perjured testimony. That investigation was suspended when the arbitrator reopened the underlying disciplinary hearing, and someone representing the City obviously realized the interviews of those two managers would have to be turned over to the accused officer's attorney for purposes of impeachment at the reconvened arbitration hearing.

Leaders must also refrain from retaliating against those who have the courage and integrity to testify truthfully. The rash of recent contracted-out internal affairs investigations (where Washburn is obviously the complainant) against officers who were truthful, involving minor, previously adjudicated accusations, some of which are years old and long since time-barred by statute, coupled with obviously retaliatory transfers further demonstrates the leadership vacuum within the current executive complement of the Indio Police Department. Indio's citizens deserve far better, and so do the men and women who place their lives on the line every day to protect Indio and its residents.

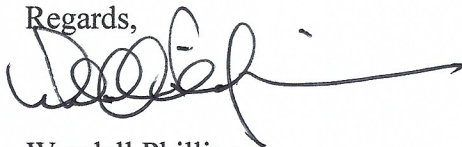
The Indio Police Officers' Association has adopted a similar position of "No Confidence" in Chief Washburn and Assistant Chief Shaefer. These actions are not part of some "labor dispute." They are an expression of principle. These individuals need to be replaced by people who can maintain the level of integrity and leadership every public safety agency must have to continue to enjoy the trust and confidence of the public.

Perhaps to an even greater degree than the military, the maintenance of morale in a law enforcement agency is vital if the highest standards of efficiency and effectiveness are the goal. Simply put, you can't motivate and lead a team of first responders if the people at the top have totally lost the respect of line level staff and middle managers, which is precisely the current situation at the IPD.

To preserve and protect the reputation of the Indio Police Department, at minimum, Washburn and Shaefer need to be placed on paid administrative leave forthwith. I have no doubt that an objective review of their above-described lack of honesty while under oath, and the acts of retaliation which have occurred since that initial misconduct was reported, can and should ultimately lead to their resignations or dismissal.

Time is of the essence since next month, Washburn will vest in both "Lifetime Medical" and CALPERS which, given the seriousness of his misconduct, almost seems like a "gift of public funds." Although this correspondence is initially being only sent to you, due to the noted time constraints involved, we request a response by 5:00 PM (PDT) on Monday, July 19, 2021.

Regards,



Wendell Phillips
IPCU General Counsel