

OFFICIAL LETTER OF RESIGNATION**From: INV. BEN NOBLE**

Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Investigator, Wagoner County Sheriff's Office

To: Chief Deputy Ron Kawano

CID Supervisor, Wagoner County Sheriff's Office

Cc: Lt. Danny Elliott, Major Dustin Dorr, Undersheriff Mark Secrist, Sheriff Chris Elliott**Date: 1/18/24**

Chief Deputy Kawano,

I am writing you this letter to inform you of my intention to resign my position with the Wagoner County Sheriff's Office effective 2 weeks from today, making my last day as an employee of Wagoner County Sheriff's Office 1/31/24. I believe it would be best for me to spend the next two weeks training and preparing my replacement to ensure that the victims of Wagoner County don't see a lapse in service in these very important cases.

Thank you,**Inv. Ben Noble #7312**

DEPARTURE LETTER

From: INV. BEN NOBLE
Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Investigator, Wagoner County Sheriff's Office

To: SHERIFF CHRIS ELLIOTT
Sheriff, Wagoner County Sheriff's Office

Cc: Undersheriff Mark Secrist, Chief Deputy Ron Kawano

Date: 1/31/24

Dear Sheriff Elliott,

Pursuant to my previously submitted resignation letter, I am writing this letter to you in an attempt to provide some insight as to the reason for my departure.

As I have heard you state multiple times in the last year that you are unwilling to give any attention to the final words of departing employees unless they are said directly to you, my intention is to organize my thoughts in this letter, and read this letter in your presence, along with the rest of command staff. As a man, and further as a person of integrity, I believe in direct and respectful confrontation. I recognize that this will be uncomfortable for your Undersheriff and Chief Deputy, as they have weaker constitutions and a fear of such confrontation, but nonetheless, you and I can speak as men if you wish.

After almost 6 years employed here at Wagoner County Sheriff's Office, I have seen many ups and downs, as is expected in any workplace. When I began here in July of 2018, this was "the place to be". I heard high praise about the leadership, culture, equipment, and upward potential at this agency and knew it had serious potential to be a place I could find success. This proved true from the very beginning. Working directly under the leadership of Major Dustin Dorr and Chief Deputy Les Young, I found the freedom to be aggressive and proactive in my patrol tactics and then ultimately in my investigations and manhunts. During the early part of my time in this agency, I never faltered in my commitment to conducting high quality investigations, my commitment to being a dependable partner to my fellow investigators and deputies, or in my loyalty to you. Yes...I was loyal to you...personally.

In Spring of 2020, I proved my loyalty to this office and to you personally through my actions. I placed myself directly in front of you and this office, defending you vigorously from the lies, exaggerations, and false narratives during your campaign. I spent countless hours on social media, in face to face conversation, and even in text message and phone conversations with former employees (one of which resulted in a FOIA request of my time and attendance by your political opponent), all to make sure that the rhetoric surrounding your campaign was truthful and in good faith. I spent my time helping you hang political signs (which I was assigned to do...I now have concerns if that was even legal for me to be ordered to do that, but I digress), and even helped count votes at your election day party. Beyond my own efforts, you were given SIGNIFICANT backing by the people who work (or worked, rather) day in and day out for you and this office. We lined street corners on election day. We waved signs. We told everyone who asked

us "What do you think of your Sheriff? Should he get my vote?" how happy we all were and how we hoped you would be elected to another term. The Wagoner County FOP invited you to address our lodge with the purpose of potentially offering your campaign an endorsement, and then subsequently provided you with a unanimous endorsement. And to our pleasure, you won convincingly. Genuinely, we were all happy to see that. This wasn't because you were the perfect leader, or the best cop in the agency, because frankly, neither of these things were true. However, in my estimation, you had exhibited integrity and done a decent job to promote a workplace culture of success and efficacy up to that point.

You were elected with the help of the people who worked for you...and that was when the switch was flipped. That was when you became what so many claimed you were during your re-election campaign.

For the next year approximately, I, along with several others, began to grow concerned at the signs we saw relating to your relationship with the "boots on the ground" and the culture that was developing at the Wagoner County Sheriff's Office.

As the President of the FOP, I had multiple opportunities to sit down with you and discuss the potential for boosting morale, tangible needs/desires among deputies that may help them do their jobs better, and to overall transform the culture of WCSO from what it was becoming, an atmosphere of **subjugation**, into an atmosphere of **cooperation toward a common goal**. These meetings were at times reasonably successful, and at times they were anything but. The one thing these meetings all had in common can be summarized in these brief words, in quotations, as they are your words and the words of your command staff: Deputies are "**whiners**", everything they ask for is "**self-serving**", and your office is not interested in "**participation trophies**". As a reminder, those self-serving whiners were the people who campaigned in their off-time for you and spread the good word of you to the community when asked. Many of these are people who actually voted for you and whose families voted for you to have a second term. Unfortunately, it didn't seem to matter. These same people were all of a sudden "**slugs**" and "**problem children**".

Let's be clear...I can only speak for the last 5.5 years, but in that time, this agency has consistently allowed a certain few deputies, on multiple occasions, to exist in a bare minimum fashion. These deputies come to work, take their calls, write minimalistic reports, and go home. They exhibit no proactivity, no desire to "**fight crime**", and no ability to work as a team with others. That is the definition of "**participation**". On the flip side, we've had many deputies who do what they can to stay proactive, make arrests in the interest of public safety, and are aggressive in their patrol tactics and investigations. These deputies, who naturally generate baseless complaints and criticism (generally by someone who is a prominent community member or someone who donates/donated to your campaign), are immediately labeled **BY YOU AND YOUR COMMAND STAFF** as "**problem children**", "**reckless**", and "**terrible cops**". These are, again, your words. Further, when the FOP made suggestions for agency awards, commendations, or otherwise positive feedback for these hard workers, these suggestions were consistently labeled as "**participation trophies**". We were told that "**In your world**" (the glory days of Tulsa Police Department), people didn't need commendations and awards to just "**do their job**" and that you and your command staff weren't going to "**award deputies for doing their job**". This was the response each time this topic would come up. The issue with that response is this...as discussed

above, your office has created a culture in which it is acceptable to do the bare minimum. If the bare minimum is acceptable, how can awards and commendations for work above and beyond the bare minimum possibly be considered “**participation trophies**”? This question has been asked multiple times, many times by me specifically, and the answer is always the same: “**In my world**” these things aren’t necessary.

One thing I want to be clear about...this agency has done a great job of equipping our deputies with quality vehicles, body armor, less lethal devices, and weapons. And I have no doubt that these will be talking points of your upcoming campaign. I also know that the lower crime rate in Wagoner County will be a talking point of your campaign. This is understandable. However, I have to ask...isn’t lowering the crime rate in Wagoner County **your job**? Is it not a basic expectation of you and your office to equip your employees with equipment and vehicles that will work when needed? Is that not **your job**? And if it is, is your re-election a “**participation trophy**” that you want simply for doing **your job**? Or perhaps should you be awarded for doing the bare minimum while deputies who actually go out and put their lives on the line should “**just be happy getting what they’re getting**”?

While on the election trail, how do you plan to address the incredible attrition of this agency under your tenure, and your inability (or possibly your unwillingness) to correct it? Is it not your job to staff this agency and to **RETAIN** that staffing? I recently read a comment on Facebook that was no doubt written by a current or former employee that seemed to ask some good questions.

1. Why has your patrol division become so depleted that your most senior deputy has **less than 3 years** with the agency (or any agency for that matter)?
2. Why does your most senior patrol supervisor have **less than 2 years** with the department? And **less than 1 year** as a supervisor?
3. Why have you had **5 patrol supervisors resign** their positions for lower ranking positions or leave the agency altogether **within the last 12-16 months**?
4. Why have you lost **half of your investigators in the last 2 months**?
5. Why has your agency’s patrol division **decreased by so much** since your first election? Do your constituents know they are **paying more for less**? And maybe a better question is, do you care?
6. Is it any coincidence that several of the above organizational changes have occurred after your hiring and multi-promotion of two of your fellow ex-TPD buddies to high ranking command staff positions? Is it any coincidence that neither of them had any meaningful leadership experience while at Tulsa Police Department, similar to you?
7. Is Wagoner County safer after all of these losses in staffing and experience?

To put this into greater perspective, are your constituents aware that their patrol staffing has changed in the last 5.5 years from 4 deputies, 1 Sergeant, and 1 Lieutenant per shift (**24 total patrol units**), to 3 deputies per shift and 2 total Lieutenants (**14 total patrol units**), which is a recent improvement from **10 total patrol units** over the last year? How do you account for the fact that **SEVERAL** of these deputies who have left in the last **1-2 years** have left for lower paying, less active positions?

Why would deputies leave an agency where they drive a nice car, carry nice weapons, and are paid decently well (in the context of a county Sheriff's Office) for jobs that pay less, give them no seniority, and provide less opportunity for proactivity? Could there possibly be another issue at hand? Could there be a common denominator? Is there any chance that the boots on the ground **aren't actually the problem**?

I don't expect answers to these questions. Rather, my hope is that you spend time in introspection. My hope is that you ask yourself this question: What would happen if you made the decision now to change your leadership style and create a culture in which the men and women who work for you can rely on the goodwill of the people who are supposed to support them the most? What would happen if the men and women who work for you were allowed to operate in an appropriate manner, regardless of how it measures up against the "**Tulsa way**"? Is it worth it to try leveling the field a bit and seeing your deputies as the professionals they are, rather than a **LOWER CLASS OF HUMAN** simply because they **don't come from the Tulsa Police Department**?

When I was promoted to Lieutenant in 2021, it became quickly apparent the contempt you had for anyone who wouldn't "**drink the lime green kool aid with bologna strips**", as you are famous for saying (for what reason, I'll never know). I don't know if you recognize the amount of damage caused by your attitude of "**if they don't like it, they can leave, and we can replace them anytime**", but it has since proved irreparable. As you know, I only even offered myself for the position of Lieutenant for two reasons; #1, to try and make an attempt to repair the working culture and relationships between those actually doing the job and those overseeing it, and #2, to one day be considered for the position of Captain. I cannot count the number of times decisions were made by Command Staff without (or in spite of) the input of frontline supervisors. As a supervisor, I relayed your wishes and defended your decisions under the guise of keeping everyone on the same page. I did this in your presence on more than one occasion and outside your presence countless times. I challenged, in private and directly to you, the ideas of you and other command staff, but made a pointed effort to have your back when translating your wishes to deputies. Was this ever noticed or appreciated? Of course it wasn't. It wasn't until later that I figured out why.

During my time as a Lieutenant, I increased my first squad's proactivity by 25 times in 9 months (let that sink in...they became **25 times more active** in less than a year and **not a single one of them quit**). You've never managed to do that, and yet, you have seen record-breaking turnover. Was this success ever noticed? No. Did I get any kind of credit for my leadership making this happen? No. Instead, I was ridiculed and told that I, along with the other Lieutenants (some of whom also saw significant increases in proactivity), wasn't doing enough and wasn't keeping a tight enough leash on my people. That alone should have revealed your true leadership style, but still I was hopeful.

In mid-2022, you brought in Mark Secrist as Captain. Again, naively, I was hopeful. Then Captain Secrist's history of leadership in the Tulsa FOP made me, and many others, see the light at the end of the tunnel. Finally, someone well-versed in the care and advocacy of working law

enforcement officers had arrived. Many of us hoped that this was the beginning of a shift for the better in this agency. That lasted all of about 4-5 months.

In spite of command staff's unwillingness to find common ground with the everyday working deputies of this agency, I continued to push and use leadership strategies that were the exact opposite of the command staff and, almost as if by magic, continued to be successful. I continued to lead each shift I was placed in charge of to show increased activity, higher quality investigations, and better team cohesion. Again, was this ever noticed, awarded, commended? No. We continued to be told we weren't doing enough and if we weren't going to get on board, we could leave.

In January 2023, I was promoted to Captain. Frankly, I was the only person you had that was qualified for this position based on my time with this agency and my résumé, but you elected to promote two Captains, even though the ranks of patrol did not support losing two patrol units, and your other ex-TPD buddy Ron Kawano was promoted along with me. Magically, he was given seniority over me. I wonder why.

During my time as Captain, I truly found revelation on where this agency was and where we were headed under the current trend of "leadership". It only took 4 months for the constant trash-talking about "lazy/entitled/inept" deputies, 3-hour lunch meetings of command staff that should have been a deleted email, and the inordinate amount of TPD glory-days stories used to further belittle deputies for me to realize that the position of Captain, and more specifically a spot in the command staff of WCSO, may not have been the place for me. I could no longer serve in that role and maintain any sense of moral righteousness or integrity. There was a time when you sought out diverse ideas and opinions on the various topics or needs of this community, but those days have long since passed. The constant dismissal of my input (input which was usually then repeated by my Co-Captain Ron Kawano and heartily praised by you and Undersheriff Secrist) was the final straw that sealed my decision. I can only put up with disrespect for so long. I quickly chose to SELF-DEMOTE, taking a pay cut, stripping myself of rank, and becoming a "worker bee" again. I did this to remove myself from the ranks of people whose tendency towards self-inflation and malice toward everyone lower on the rung was only growing greater and greater. I simply couldn't stay there and retain any ounce of dignity that I had.

This part is for (now) Chief Deputy Ron Kawano. As said before, my hope is that I'm being given the opportunity to read this to you face to face (but not likely). Once again, as a person wanting to believe that things will work out in the end, I had high hopes for the guy I had heard dubbed "Shotgun Ron". After one-on-one lunches, meetings, phone conversations, and more, it seemed that you (Kawano) were a decent guy and someone who may be willing to help me correct some of the issues within this agency from the top down. I even stood in front of our FOP Members in the February 2023 meeting and told them, after they expressed their deep concerns at yet another former TPD guy coming in to run the show, that I had no reason to believe you would be anything other than a good resource for us all to learn from and work with!

I COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE WRONG. In short, it took a brief amount of time for me to see you for what you truly are: a morally inept, integrity-free, tantrum-throwing child who dropped his proverbial hammer the moment he received power. I watched you send unprofessional

emails, curse out deputies for asking you questions, mistreat WCSO Secretaries after walking into their office and throwing a fit, complaining about me to my colleagues (your subordinates) on multiple occasions, bragging to others about withholding information on my cases, demoting two of my partners because you got your feelings hurt (causing one of them to quit immediately and the other to begin looking for another job), run off multiple deputies, lie on MULTIPLE occasions, force investigators to cancel their personal plans to cover on-call shifts due to your ineptness and inability to schedule/lead, and steal overtime opportunities from multiple people in this agency for no other reason than punishment for making you mad and bruising your ego. Your predecessor, Chief Deputy Les Young, was a leader of people and someone who was seen as a true leader and mentor. You are a stain on his legacy here, and without serious intervention, you will never be any more than that. With all the sincerity in the world, you need to go back to retirement and stay that way. You are a cancer of epic proportions and I wouldn't wish your style of "leadership" on my worst enemy.

Then there's Undersheriff Mark Secrist, perhaps the biggest disappointment of them all. As said before, my hope is that I'm being given the opportunity to read this to you face to face (but not likely). I'll be brief...for a man who made a considerable amount of his career as an FOP guy, someone who allegedly cares for the working man, it took just a few months for you (Secrist) to adopt Sheriff Elliott's attitude against the deputies in this agency. There's been no desire to understand. There's been no desire to figure out the root of issues, but rather only a continued narrative of "whiny/entitled/lazy" deputies. You and Chief Kawano worked in concert to take my and other employees' ability to earn overtime through the SADV Grant, and sat there and lied to my face when you told me that it was because of "the pay rate". In reality, the two of you, who couldn't be any less interested in actual police work, chose to punish me because I refused to kiss your feet. It must've confused you when I didn't sell my dignity for money, but unlike the two of you, doing what's right is actually important to me. You didn't just hurt me. You hurt Casey Rivers, Project Assistant for the grant. You hurt my fellow investigators. You hurt deputies. But hey...it didn't make any difference for you, did it? You beat me, which is what was really important. It's impressive, really, how quickly the Sheriff got a union-man to become a genuine admin Blue Falcon. Join your buddy Shotgun Ron and go back to retirement and stay there!

Sheriff, I often wondered, how could you let all of this happen? That's when I found out that you continued to be the common denominator in many of these issues, either instigating them from the start or encouraging them to continue. It's hard for me to accept that as reality. Why would you allow/encourage/instigate so much division within this office? Why would you allow members of your command staff to target employees who are simply trying to keep their heads down and do their jobs? From May 2023 until now, I worked **over 210 cases** personally. I provided service and coordinated to help victims receive advocacy services for over **260 victims of Domestic Violence and Sex Crimes**. I submitted **over 130 cases** to the District Attorney's Office. I arrested multiple violent rapists and child sexual abusers, many of whom gave confessions in my interviews. I elicited confessions from murderers and domestic abusers, hunted down and arrested stalkers and those who violated protective orders, and more. And that was all just in the last 8 months, and isn't counting the quality work I've done for this office for 5 years before that. How many times did I hear from you or Undersheriff Secrist or Chief Deputy Kawano with a "good job" or "how can we help" or anything like that? **Not once**. That's in stark contrast to the amount

of times my partners and I were labeled “troublemakers” and “uncooperative” and other nonsense. **Do you even care about victims? Do you even care about bad guys being locked up? Did I not do it the “TPD Way”?** What does it take to get you and your posse of yes men to back off and actually care about fighting crime in this community? You once cared about this community. Where did that go?

I could go on, but I recognize that if I didn't get the chance to read or finish reading this to you in person, you probably didn't even make it this far. Why? Because the value you place on the thoughts of those who serve at your pleasure extends only to the point where your ears cease to be tickled by accolades for how great you, your command staff, and your alma mater are. So, if you'll allow it, I'm almost done.

You will no doubt peddle the narrative to all who will listen that my leaving this agency can be boiled down to “He found more money, so he left”, thereby absolving you and your dumpster fire of a command staff (Sheriff/Undersheriff/Chief Deputy) of any and all potential responsibility for my leaving and the mass exodus that preceded me. Unfortunately, I'll have to debunk that myth.

Within 6 months of coming to this agency, I received an offer for a better-paying job with better hours. Two years ago, I received another offer for a better-paying job with a state agency. One year ago I received yet another job offer for better pay, better benefits, quicker retirement, and collective bargaining. Through all of these offers, I held out hope for this agency and for my future here, but most of all, **I held out hope for YOU**. I convinced myself that this was a slump you would get out of. To my disappointment, time after time, ex-TPD hire after ex-TPD hire, and attrition after attrition, **you proved me wrong**.

In September, you promoted then Captain Kawano to Chief Deputy, making him the head of Patrol AND Investigations. This was, by far, one of the worst managerial decisions you have ever made. You had two candidates in front of you for this position, because these were the only two you allowed to apply (we call that **A CLUE** in law enforcement). One candidate had YEARS of running this investigative unit under his belt, had run your mini-academies with distinction, and had taken your equipment and training program, which was in shambles, and actually made it work. This was Major Dustin Dorr, a man who had given nearly **TWO DECADES** to this office and **to YOU throughout your entire administration**. The other option was to promote someone who couldn't investigate their way out of a paper bag, with almost no experience in actual criminal investigations, and who, up to that point, had only made the patrol situation WORSE. Shockingly enough, this was your old TPD buddy, Ron Kawano. Somehow, you chose Kawano to then run **both Investigations and Patrol** (he then delegated all of the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Deputy position to Investigators...how ironic). The concept here will always elude me, but that was the decision that was made. I told Chief Deputy Kawano in September 2023, when he took over the supervision of Investigations, that if this agency wasn't careful, those of us with the ability to increase our value elsewhere would eventually take advantage of that opportunity. I further explained that we were still here because we wanted to be here...because we wanted to be a part of serving **this community with our best**. He responded by demoting two seasoned Investigators for no more than making him mad, pulling the ripcord on grant overtime for myself and any others who wanted to take advantage of it, enlisting deputies to spy on their colleagues, and playing favorites with rules based on who he was mad at that week...and you and your

Undersheriff stood by and let it all happen. I even sat down with Kawano and Secrist and called it out **personally**, not that it mattered, because Secrist backed his buddy. No surprise here.

Finally, yes, I am leaving, and I won't be the last one. I am leaving for a better-paying job with better benefits, better retirement, etc., and I want it to be as clear as it possibly can be. WCSO has all of the potential in the world to be a great agency. The vast majority of the deputies in this agency have the potential to have seriously bright futures in law enforcement. Up until you, Secrist, and Kawano gutted us, we had an extremely tight-knit investigative unit that solved heinous, violent, and shocking crimes on a very regular basis, **but that wasn't good enough for you. It was more important for you to exercise power and to wield authority, and our team cohesion was a threat to that.**

So please make no mistake. I'm not leaving for more money. I'm not leaving for a better car. I'm not leaving for more freedom. I'm leaving what can be equated to a professional domestic violence relationship. I've had enough of the abuse, the lack of personal accountability by leadership, the gaslighting, the passive aggression, the lack of or intentional neglect of communication, the mental games, and the overall disdain you and your leadership have for anyone who isn't or doesn't want to be exactly like you.

Ending on a positive note, the good news is there is still time to turn this thing around. There's still time to make this "the place to be" once again. What's more, you have the ability to do that. There was a time when you and your previous command staff actually retained the respect of the people who worked for you. There was a time when you and your command staff inspired the law enforcement officers of this agency to **BE BETTER and DO BETTER**, if for no other reason, simply to please you. That's because they believed their respect and loyalty for you actually meant something. If you take anything from this letter, take this: With the exception of one or two who have their hands in your pocket because they believe that's the quickest way to the top, no one here respects you anymore. No one respects your command staff. No one believes that loyalty to you or this agency holds any kind of value anymore, and this is only true for one reason. You traded any leadership abilities you once had for the ravings and orders of a tyrant. Where you used to inspire people to grow in their skills, you now inspire good deputies to search for opportunities elsewhere...not because you've "trained us so well" or "provided us with so much experience"...rather it is because this ship is sinking fast and no one wants to go down with it.

You have all of the resources at your disposal to change all of that, but you need to be corrected and you need to be humbled. My hope for you, and for the sake of the men and women who work for you, is that you will recognize that what you're doing isn't working, and by forming a partnership of cooperation with your people, you have a better chance of making this agency reach its full potential. Otherwise, you may win re-election, but nothing will improve...for any of you, and least of all for the citizens of Wagoner County, who **DESERVE BETTER**.

Hoping You Find Balance,

Inv. Ben Noble #7312