

**TO: Members, Fire and Police Commission
 Mayor
 City Council Members
 Local News Media
 PBPA #6**

DATE: December 4, 2007

This letter is being written after a great deal of thought by Dominic Iasparro, Steve Pirages, Ted Getty and Tim Ferguson. We have witnessed the unfolding of events within the Rockford Police Department and feel we can no longer remain silent. We have individually been asked numerous times why we left the department. It has often times been a public point of interest as well, most recently in the Chief's interview on WIFR. Out of respect for the new administration and to avoid publicly airing our differences, we made no comment, indicating only that we left to pursue other opportunities. However, in light of the continuous news coverage, particularly the extensive articles presented in the Sunday Register Star and growing controversy surrounding this issue, we felt the time was right to voice our concerns. We do this not with malice towards Chief Chester Epperson, but with a genuine concern for the preservation of the history of the Rockford Police Department and concern for the future of the Rockford Police Department.

Each of us have spent our entire career with the Rockford Police Department and have the utmost respect for the sworn and civilian men and women of that agency. Each of us love the department and each of us left before we had planned to do so. We all left for the same reason – the management and leadership style of Chief Chester Epperson. We had hoped to remain on the department for several more years, supporting the new police administration and the Mayor in their community policing visions. After all, we were able to successfully work under four previous police chiefs. However, after several weeks of working directly with Chief Epperson, it was clear that none of us could, with a clear conscience, support his leadership style. Rather than adapt our leadership style to his and compromise our own values for sake of being able to work with the “boss”, we chose to leave, but with heavy hearts. Dissention among the rank and file was only beginning; to have stated our true reasons for leaving so soon after Chief Epperson's appointment would not have been fair to him or the public. We felt he deserved a chance. We were hopeful he would learn from his mistakes. Our departures were not about “cultural transformation”, a rhetorical phrase that has become a common theme with Chief Epperson.

Each of us at approximately age 50, still had much to contribute. Our talents and commitment to law enforcement were well known within the Rockford/Winnebago County community as well as outlying areas. Sheriff Richard Meyers had worked with each of us over the years and felt that the existing expertise of the professional men and women of his department would be a healthy match to what we each, as individuals could bring to the four time accredited agency. We are grateful to him for the opportunity to work with his staff. It is very common for retired law enforcement professionals to continue their careers with other agencies, often times moving between local, state and

federal entities. For example, retirees from the Sheriff's Office are now in command positions of the only other two accredited agencies in Winnebago County, the Cherry Valley Police Department and the South Beloit Police Department. Professionals in other career paths do the same. We bring this to light in response to Chief Epperson's comments regarding our change in employment as "government double dipping". Because we are still actively involved in law enforcement, we can see first hand how the battle within the City Police Department negatively affects law enforcement as a whole.

Although Chief Epperson is correct to focus his priorities within the City of Rockford, it cannot be done within a vacuum. As with anything else, there is strength in numbers and cooperation between agencies is crucial if we are to reduce our crime rate, increase our solve rate and bring the most effective and efficient services to all citizens throughout Winnebago County. We believe the lack of stability within the Rockford Police Department has caused a once cohesive law enforcement community partnership to become strained. For example, Metro Narcotics no longer has Rockford Police participation, joint SWAT/hostage training between two major agencies have ceased and the sharing of information has become a cumbersome task. These are serious issues that can only negatively impact public safety.

One thing needs to be made clear. We do not oppose Chief Epperson's community policing programs. Most of them are nothing new – only marketed differently giving them the illusion of new strategies. We do not oppose his inclusion of citizens in the effort to reduce crime. His policing strategies are not the problem. The problem rests with his inability to show respect for others and his condescending and arrogant style of leadership. The programs that have been established can continue to be carried forward by anyone. But the person carrying them forward must have the ability to motivate officers of the department and provide a leadership style that fosters a mentoring environment. Chief Epperson is highly educated and his contributions in the areas of research and development, planning and support function have been outstanding and are crucial to the overall operations of a police agency. Unfortunately, his people skills and leadership abilities have proven to be detrimental.

As a group, we are extremely disappointed when the Chief refers to the mediocrity of prior police administrations and indirectly blames past policing tactics on today's problems. He is of the opinion that prior to his administration, those before him neglected the true community problems. He is not only speaking of us, but of other retired and current officers. The four of us collectively have over 100 years of law enforcement experience, have earned the respect of our peers, have impeccable performance records and have never had our integrity brought into question. We have no motive for our actions here other than to express our opinions and end speculation as to why we chose to retire.

Page Three
December 4, 2007

We believe that only with new leadership can the Rockford Police Department move forward in its mission to deal with complex policing issues, both internally and throughout our community.

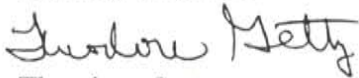
Respectfully submitted:



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Timothy Ferguson



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Retirees, Rockford City Police Department