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DEC 19 2017

18 December 2017

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S  
OFFICE

To the County Administrator; Mr. Jack Brown,

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the letter of Pending Disciplinary Action, and to express my desire to continue my employment with Escambia County. I have recently been made aware of some very serious allegations against me concerning my behavior both on and off-duty. The intended desire of this letter is to acknowledge the faults or errors in my judgement and to provide clarity on the events that have occurred.

First, I would like to address the topic of creating a hostile work environment. I have never knowingly created an atmosphere in which to discriminate against anyone based off their gender or sex. I firmly believe in Equal Opportunity and the rights that all share both on and off the job. There have been times that I have expressed an opinion that no person: male or female, be allowed to perform this job if they are not physically capable of performing at the highest tier. If this was ever construed to be taken as an affront to any female employees then I am sincerely apologetic. In this career and my previous job in the military, my life and those of my co-workers are consistently on the line and the safety of my peers and myself are of the highest priority. I am extremely bothered to learn that I had any part in making someone feel unwelcome or uncomfortable in the fire service. During my five and half years in Escambia County I have never had anyone express to me that my conduct made them feel this way. In reference to the firefighter who expressed their concerns regarding my conduct, I have never worked at the same station, shift, or participated in pass down with that individual during my employment.

Next, I would like to speak about the comments that were made during HAZMAT training in early August of 2016. In this circumstance, I find myself very remorseful for the comment I made. I admittedly made an inappropriate comment to a fellow co-worker. I would like to add that this was not a game, it was a poor attempt at humor, and was not pre-meditated or ever repeated. This comment in no way shape or form was intended to intimidate or harass any individual, nor do I believe that it represents my beliefs or character. I understand that regardless of intention that comments like the one that was said are never acceptable.

I would like to discuss the matter of the altercation that took place on 29 August 2016. The important fact of this matter is that it too took place over one year ago, and that both parties involved were disciplined by the fire chief; Pat Grace. Both LT Martin and I were summoned to the fire chief's office where we received verbal counseling and a letter of counseling/reprimand that we signed. Fire Chief Pat Grace issued the aforementioned discipline. Unfortunately, neither Martin nor I received a copy of this letter, but we were told that this would stay with the fire chief and remain at the department level. Also in attendance at this meeting was the Local 4131 Union President Nick Gradia.

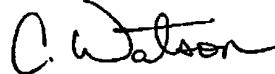
I understand that this type of behavior unfavorably represents the department in which we serve. This was nothing more than an unfortunate event that occurred between two friends. I would like to note that myself and Martin have since then remained very cordial and professional both on and off-duty. I think that it should also be mentioned that while Martin was out of work I worked for him on a shift swap, and furthermore, I made offers to assist with his medical bills.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate that I understand that my actions were inappropriate, and I am very remorseful for the damage it caused the department and others. I would like to take a moment to express my commitment to not only my department, but those I serve and serve with. Nearly five and half years ago, following an eight-year career in the U.S. Navy, I relocated my family from Central Florida to begin our new life and career up here in Pensacola. Since moving, I have been a top performer in the fire department, I serve on the executive board as Vice President of the Union, I have orchestrated the awards ceremony for the past two years, and have been on the honor guard for almost 5 years. I say these things not to negate what I have done, but to show that I want to continue to be an asset to this department.

I take all the accusations very seriously and just want the opportunity to show Escambia County that I can and will be better in the future. If able to continue my employment in Escambia County I would like to issue a formal apology to the entirety of the Escambia County Family for how my conduct has affected them, I would like to potentially assist in conducting additional county education on equal opportunity and the importance of professionalism in the fire service, and I would gladly participate in whatever capacity that would be helpful to ensure that the fire department's training regimen helps support our firefighters performing to the best of our ability. I firmly believe in the progression and diversification of all employment opportunities, including those within the fire service. Please take this letter and the attached letters of character reference by my current and former supervisors into account when deciding not only my future but that of my family too.

Sincerely,

Firefighter Chris Watson



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