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August 2016 meeting, retired police officer Mayor Dave Hallback motioned to not dismiss Beckman. The vote on the mayor's motion tied 3-3, with Hallback and council members Steve Langley and Jeff Rock voting to not fire Beckman, while council members Dave Bjerkness, Kerry Kolodge and Lara Wilkinson voted against the mayor's motion.

Because it was a tie vote — councilor Roger Maki was out of town — Beckman was not fired and the matter went back to the police chief for discipline. In the end, Beckman was given 11 days suspension without pay. Chief Stracek also issued a performance improvement plan that required Beckman wear a microphone while working, to mitigate any legal issues that might arise because falsifying the search warrant may have impacted his ability to testify credibly under oath.

The situation in Carlton County and Cloquet with Beckman is remarkably similar to a case in Hennepin County earlier this year.

In that case, an Eden Prairie police detective lied about a search warrant that was valid for a house but not a car associated with a drug bust. According to a Minnesota Public Radio story, Eden Prairie Detective Travis Serafin allegedly created a doctored warrant for the car using a copy of the house warrant. When the subterfuge was discovered, a subsequent investigation concluded the warrant and the detective's testimony were untruthful and not a mistake. A total of 32 other cases involving Serafin were dismissed as a result.

In Beckman's case, according to disciplinary files obtained by the Pine Knot News, on Feb. 6, 2016, he applied for a search warrant, under oath, that contained information he had previously discovered to be untrue. Additionally, the day before that he had also responded to a call in which he failed to "ascertain the facts, accurately document, or record the information provided by the reporting party/witness" in his police report.

Chief Stracek sent a letter to Carlton County Attorney Thom Pertler regarding Beckman's discipline on March 2, 2017, according to a copy obtained by the Pine Knot News.

"An internal investigation into

alleged misconduct by Corporal Scott Beckman has been completed," Stracek wrote, not long before members of the Cloquet police union took a vote of "no confidence" in him. "The findings of the investigation were that the allegations of misconduct were sustained. Based on the nature of the misconduct and consistent with my ethical duties." He then referred to two U.S. Supreme Court decisions that require such disclosures.

In his capacity as acting county attorney, Boucher said he enacted a Brady Disclosure policy on Dec. 3, referring to the Supreme Court Case, *Brady v. Maryland*, that requires disclosure of "exculpatory" material — which could exonerate a defendant of guilt — specifically including misconduct findings involving law enforcement officers.

"When the Assistant County Attorneys learned of the misconduct finding involving City of Cloquet police officer Beckman, all pending cases involving Officer Beckman were dismissed without prejudice pending a comprehensive review," Boucher wrote in a press release Wednesday.

Sixth District Chief Public Defender Daniel Lew confirmed that defense attorneys for his office received records of the "sustained acts of dishonesty by Cloquet Police Officer Scott Beckman on Aug. 17, 2018."

Lew urged that the county review all cases involving Beckman, going back even further than the 2016 case involving the falsified search warrant application.

"We must restore and rebuild trust and confidence for our law enforcement community," Lew told the Pine Knot Wednesday. "I urge the Cloquet Police Department and the Carlton County Attorney's Office to subject all prior cases involving Mr. Beckman to undergo an independent integrity review by a panel of local and statewide attorneys."

Dismissed cases

In response to a previous public data request, on Dec. 14 the Pine Knot News received a list of 20 criminal cases involving Beckman that were dismissed by the Carlton County Attorney's office in July and August.

The cases included numerous felony fifth-degree drug charges, fourth-degree drug sales, domestic assault, felon in possession of a firearm, third-degree drug sales in a school/park/public housing zone, first-degree damage to property, and theft of a motor vehicle. In at least one instance, a case was dismissed in which the defendant had already pleaded guilty.

Boucher said the 20 cases were "dismissed without prejudice" pending comprehensive review, which means that some cases could be filed again if review of the evidence establishes that the case could be successfully prosecuted in light of the information regarding Beckman.

He also said it's possible that additional cases will be dismissed.

"The fair trial of a defendant depends on complete truthfulness by everyone involved," Boucher wrote. "We are committed to a fair and transparent review of the integrity of all impacted prosecutions and will provide further updates to the public as additional information is available."

Separation agreement

After meeting behind closed doors for just over an hour Tuesday, the Cloquet City Council voted 4-3 to approve the separation and release agreement between the city and Beckman.

Council members Kerry Kolodge, Dave Bjerkness and Jeff Rock voted against approving the agreement, while Mayor Dave Hallback and council members Barb Wyman, Steve Langley and Roger Maki voted to approve the agreement. No comments were made on the reasons behind the votes.

City Administrator Aaron Reeves said Tuesday that under the terms of the separation agreement, Beckman would receive payment for one-third of his accrued sick leave.

Although the Pine Knot News filed a public data request regarding Beckman's release and allegations of police misconduct Wednesday morning, Reeves said he could not elaborate on any details of the agreement until all parties have signed off on it.

Further details from the city were unavailable as this issue of the Pine Knot News went to press.

The light of days

Letting her light shine in the darkness is this year's St. Lucia, Addison Kozelouzek. As part of the Swedish tradition, Kozelouzek led the candlelit processional of children down the aisle at Zion Lutheran Church and later helped serve treats during coffee fellowship on Dec. 9. Dec. 13 is actually the Feast Day of St. Lucia. Under the old Julian calendar, Dec. 13 was the winter solstice — the shortest day of the year. Santa Lucia, with her crown of light, heralded the growing light of the days to come. *Contributed Photo*

Mayor, councilors finish out terms with a bang

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At the final Cloquet City Council meeting for the year and before heading into closed session, city officials and fellow councilors said goodbye to outgoing Mayor Dave Hallback along with council members Dave Bjerkness, Jeff Rock and Barb Wyman. All four ran for re-election but were defeated either in the primary or general election.

As one of the final business items of the year, the council voted 5-2 (Bjerkness and Kerry Kolodge dissenting) to approve a tentative settlement with the new Teamsters union for the Cloquet police command staff, including the police chief and two commanders.

Bjerkness was part of the negotiations with City Administrator Aaron Reeves and Human Resources Director James Barclay, but he questioned a late addition to the contract that would place any of the command staff — whose posi-

tions were eliminated due to restructuring — at the top of the hiring list for patrol officers.

"I'm astounded that this is still in here and that the other Teamsters union would allow this," Bjerkness said.

Reeves responded that the other union (for police officers and sergeants) contract doesn't address hiring, only promotions. He added that it's a good way to hang onto good police officers who might want to finish their years before retirement.

Kolodge expressed concern that the department might be tempted to keep a patrol spot open "as a fallback."

"It really is a clause of guaranteed employment, which is what I struggle with," said Bjerkness.

In other matters Tuesday:
• Washington Avenue will get a serious facelift next summer as Carlton County reconstructs the road from Minnesota Highway 33 to County

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