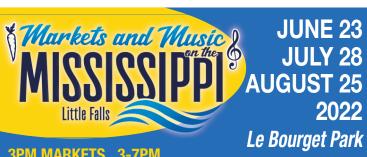


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Volume 54, No. 14

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Investigative report of Royalton police chief outlines alleged misconduct

By SHEILA BERGREN Staff Writer sheila.bergren@apgecm.com

sulting in Woodbury to externally investigate alleged misconduct of the city's chief of police, Lindsay Bruyere.

a complaint that was brought to Council Member Ron Verley, former liaison for the Royalton Police Department, and former Mayor Andrea Lauer on May 8, 2021.

Bruyere had falsely claimed and was compensated for time he did not work. Documentation that allegedly supported the complaint the complaint and the need to hire rail-grade separation on the Me- it goes over the railroad tracks on was also given to Verley and Lau-

Verley, as the liaison at the time for the Royalton Police De-

On July 6, 2021, Verley presenting had been accidentally erased. ed Bruyere's annual performance review to the Council. He said it

was positive and didn't mention anything about the complaint. As City Adminisnone of the other council members, Jeff Gerads, Brenda Weiss-In October 2021, the Royalton Pesta and Kurt Schott, were aware an update, May City Council hired Soldo Con- of the complaint, the Council approved Bruyere's annual performance review.

Schott, Gerads and Pesta found out about the complaint two days The decision stemmed from later, on July 8, 2021, in a conversation with the complainant, Pesta

While the three council mem- City bers pushed for a third-party investigation, Pesta said Verley and County Board The complaint alleged that Lauer felt the matter had already been resolved in-house.

The Council then held a special meeting July 15, 2021, to discuss an external investigator. Part of the meeting was closed to the public. While council meetings can be closed to discuss personnel issues, partment, spoke with Bruyere the Minnesota open meeting law about the complaint. He accepted requires that closed meetings are Bruyere's explanation as to why he electronically recorded. However, hadn't punched in or out on his when requested, the Morrison time cards, but had simply written County Record was informed by it in by hand. He had simply for- Pesta that when the city was gath- Little Falls, was charged in Mor- miles north of Hillman in Rich- peared to be a gotten to do so, he allegedly told ering material for Soldo's investi- rison County District Court with ardson Township. gation, they found out the record-

> Pesta said that the recording (Continued on Page 5A)

LF waiting for word on potential bridge funding

By ZACH HACKER Staff Writer zach.hacker@ apgecm.com

Little Falls trator Jon Radermacher gave 24, on a potential major bridge realignment project.

During joint meetbetween

Graphic by Short Elliott Hendrickson

\$1.50

the Little Falls A preliminary design by Short Elliott Hendrickson shows how a possible realignment of the Council Memorial Bridge in Little Falls would look compared to keeping the bridge in the same place Morrison if the city is to move forward with a grade separation project.

of Commissioners, Radermacher morial Bridge in downtown Little the west side of the river. said the city is still waiting to find Falls — which crosses the Missisout if it will secure state funding sippi River on Trunk Highway 27 to help pay for the project. The — would realign the bridge so that

"For us, the primary reason is public safety," Radermacher said. "We have our police station, our (Continued on Page 2A)

Watkins arrested for alleged armed robbery

By ZACH HACKER

Staff Writer zach.hacker@apgecm.com

Dustin Donald Watkins, 39, one count of first-degree aggravated robbery.

iff's Office announced, Wednes- robbery at the business. The sus-

day, that Watkins was arrested in pect allegedly enconnection to an armed robbery tered the business at The Cave Bar & Grill, located near the intersection of Highway 27 and 370th Avenue, about four holding what ap-

According to the Sheriff's Office, at about 12:18 a.m. Tuesday, from the elec- Dustin Watkins The Morrison County Sher- it received a report of an armed tronic pull tabs

wearing "a scarf around his neck, black rifle." He demanded money



(Continued on Page 2A)





(060522-MemorialDay22) Staff photos by Sheila Bergren

Fallen soldiers, those missing in action and prisoners of war, remembered during Swanville ceremony

A multitude of people gathered at the Lions Park in Swanville on Memorial Day, May 30, where a program honoring and recognizing the brave men and women who died for their country, as well as the soldiers who were missing in action or prisoners of war. A missing man table was set up in the park building with a white tablecloth, a single red rose, its vase tied with a red ribbon, a slice of lemon, a pinch of salt, a Bible, an inverted glass and an empty chair. After the program, a parade was held on DeGraff Avenue until visitors and participants boarded two school buses that took them to the Spring Brook Cemetery for another short program before a gun salute was held and David Hollenkamp played taps on the bugle. Pictured above left (from left) are Fred Duke (U.S. Marine Corp), commander of American Legion Post 313; Royce Bacon (Army), member of American Legion Post 313; Bob Popkins, (Army), member of American Legion Post 313 and VFW Post 6037; Don Tisdell (Air Force), member of American Legion Post 313; Glenn Palm (Army); member of American Legion Post 313; David Sobania (Army), member of American Legion Post 313; Bill Schillinger (Army), commander of VFW Post 6037. Pictured above right: Rick Krauel (Navy), member of American Legion Post 313 and VFW Post 6037; Bruce Johnson (Army), member of American Legion Post 313 and VFW Post 6037; Harvey Johnson (Navy), member of American Legion Post 313 and VFW Post 6037; Izaak Schafer, (Army National Guard), member of VFW Post 6037; and Chuck Harrison (Navy), member of American Legion Post 313.





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Morrison County Record 216 SE First Street Little Falls, MN 56345





Investigative report

(Continued from Page 1A) device the city used at the time was also shared with the Royalton Police Department to be used for interviews and other meetings.

"When we had a closed door meeting, the former mayor brought in the device and left with the device," she

Since then, the city has ordered a new recording device with a removable drive that is dedicated for council use. The city also implemented a new process in December 2021, when the Council records a meeting, in which the disc with the recording is removed and placed in a sealed envelope with the date and content on the outside. City Clerk Leah Walberg then files the envelope in a locked cabinet, Pesta said.

In the investigative report, Attorney and Investigator Michelle Soldo said the firm received records and reviewed them during the period of Nov. 10, 2021 to Jan. 17, 2022. During this time, Bruyere also received and responded to a Garrity-compelled data request. Bruyere's Garrity-compelled investigatory interview was conducted Jan. 17, 2022, in accordance with the requirements of the Minnesota Peace Officer Disciplinary Procedures Act, Minn. until he was Stat. §626.89.

According to Soldo's report, the allegation was that on 25 days between Jan. 18, 2021, and April 17, 2021, in violation of city time reporting expectations and Royalton Police Department policies, Bruyere claimed to have worked and was compensated for time he did not work.

Soldo said in her report that the investigation yielded two findings. While the record established that Bruyere claimed to have worked time he did not work, Soldo said the record didn't establish that he had falsely claimed to do so.

"Chief Bruyere offered valid reasons for some of the discrepancies in his time reporting," she said.

The discrepancies are attributable to Bruyere either failing to punch in at the start of his work shift and/ or failing to punch out at the end of his work shift, partment employs four offi- independently verified. as is required by city policy; his authorized practice of flexing his time; and his unauthorized practice of rework at the Royalton Police trol officer position has re-Department due to personal mained vacant. matters and was only availhome as "on-call time," according to Soldo's report.

In addition to the first

reporting practices, the record indicates the city should consider the chief's overall effectiveness in his part-time role given his limited availability (due to other full-time work) to respond to the law enforcement needs of the city and effectively supervise, train and mentor officers.'

In the report, Soldo went over the factual basis for the findings. Beginning with Bruyere's factual background, she said Bruyere has worked full-time for the Minnesota Department of Corrections as a correctional officer at the prison in St. Cloud since 1998. He works at the prison from 6 a.m. - 2 p.m. on four weekdays and every other weekend.

Bruyere has been a licensed peace officer since 2002. Beginning in 2002, he worked for the Royalton Police Department as an officer until 2004.

"He left for one year to work for the St. Cloud Po-Department," lice Soldo said.

Bruyere work for the Royalton Police Department in 2005, where he remained working part-time as officer for 17 years appointed as

police chief in a parttime capacity

"The chief sets his

part-time Royalton

Police Department

schedule based on

his full-time

Department of

Corrections work

schedule."

that he could continue to work his full-time job at the Department of Corrections.

Soldo said in the report that Bruyere creates and posts the work schedule for the Royalton Police Department one month in advance. The posted schedule identifies officer work schedules that if the Council accepted and the chief's anticipated work schedule.

'The chief sets his parttime Royalton Police Department schedule based on his full-time Department of Corrections work schedule. The chief works up to 30 hours a week for the Royalton Police Department and may work more if he of 25 days, Bruyere had is required to pick up open shifts," Soldo said in the report.

The Royalton Police Decers, including the part-time lice officers. However, since work for the Royalton Po-

After analyzing city able to take phone calls at records and Bruyere's response to the time reporting vice. He was only available allegations, it was found that the allegations were not subfinding, Soldo said in the stantiated on two of 25 days, said. report, "Beyond verified de- as the record showed he had

ficiencies in Chief Bruyere's worked. This was the factual basis for the first finding, Soldo said in the report.

> On 15 of 25 days, the report said Bruyere had offered objectively valid explanations for the time he claimed to have worked. One explanation was that he doesn't log in to the Law Enforcement Technology Group software (LETG) when he performs administrative work or calls in to dispatch, since he isn't available to respond to calls for service.

According to the report, Bruyere told Soldo that three hours is usually the minimum time he typically records on his time card when he came into the office for administrative work.

On some days, Bruyere has claimed to have worked three hours, there is a question as to whether he worked the full three hours, according to the report. In the report, Bruyere told Soldo that there were times he ended his shift early for personal reasons, such as being called home to address a family returned to matter, but still claimed to

have worked the full three hours. difference in time was then balanced to compensate for days he worked more than what he was scheduled to work. —Report by Michelle Bruyere alleg-Soldo

time reportwith Council authorization ing practice was verbally authorized by Verley.

The report said while Bruyere acknowledged that he had failed to comply with the city's timecard policy, he was adamant that he would not and did not falsely report time he did not work.

Bruyere's explanation, there would be no time discrepancy for the 15 days. If the Council didn't accept his explanation, there was a discrepancy of up to 40.85 hours. As Bruyere receives \$39.78 per hour, 40.85 hours equals \$1,625.

Soldo said that on nine claimed to have worked a total of 54 hours and 58 minutes of unauthorized "oncall" time, which cannot be

The purported on-call work due to personal issues. Chief Bruyere, by his own account, was not available to respond to calls for serto respond to phone calls (taken from home)," Soldo

According to the report,

Bruyere told Soldo that on our village not be a part of some days that he worked the community just erodes/ "on-call" time, he contacted stagnates our city's potential and informed the Morrison to prosper. The City Coun-County Sheriff's Office dis- cil is elected by the members patch — which action or of our community and are non-action cannot be inde- therefore acting on our bependently verified without half. The members of our making a data request to the community believe there Sheriff's Office, which would likely take considerable time to obtain, Soldo said. The Morrison County Record has over the past few years of submitted a data request to the Morrison County Sheriff's Office for dispatch data related to Bruyere on the specific dates.

the nine dates in question in our police department. were similar to or the same Due to the lack of trust and as the ones he gave in regard to the 15 days, Soldo's report said. If the Council accepted his explanations, Soldo said termination from the Royalthere were no time discrepancies. If the Council didn't, then there was a 54 hours natures from business ownand 58 minutes discrepancy, equaling \$2,187.

After the Council received the investigative report from Soldo, a special meeting was held March 15, to discuss the findings. Bruyere's request, the meeting — which lasted about 50 minutes — was closed to the The public. After the meeting 2022 meeting. Officer Wenwas reopened, the Council tland was one of a couple said the corrective action of people soliciting business they decided to take after reviewing the results was to place a written warning in Bruyere's personnel file.

was asked by the Council how many hours he estiestimated the number of hours to be between 10 to 15 hours per week. Council Member Tony Cimenski, who filled Pesta's seat after Lauer resigned last fall as mayor, said since Bruyere's work schedule is set for 20 ever see him in the commu- other police officer.

and that the estimated weekto complete administrative work varies from week to

week to the next. It could specific. She also said she be three hours one week, it wasn't aware of what the could be 10 hours next week. It all depends on what's go-tive report. ing on," Bruyere said.

received a petition, which I have enough on my plate," was presented by Jake Wen- she said. chief, one part-time police time reflects time Chief tland, a former Royalton officer and two full-time po- Bruyere was scheduled to police officer, who resigned ed a letter from Royalton to full-time, the Council apfrom the Royalton Police High School/Middle School cording hours he could not July 2021, the part-time palice Department and did not Department in July 2021 Principal Joel Swenson, at 3, to hire a full-time police to work at another depart-

The petition said, "As in

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was a breach of trust, with Mr. Bruyere and our city funds, as well as a pattern less community involvement between the chief and the community as a whole. We feel the City Council should take action to restore the Bruyere's explanation to trust and bond we once had involvement community Police Chief Bruvere has shown, we are requesting his ton Police Department."

The petition had 54 sigers, managers and residents.

Five days later, on April 10, Lauer mailed a copy of the petition with a letter to Wentland's supervisor at his new job.

"Attached is a survey that Officer Jake Wentland presented to the Royalton City Council at its April 5, owners and residents to sign the survey. As is stated in the survey, the express result is to have Royalton Police During the regular coun- Chief, Lindsay Bruyere, tercil meeting, May 3, Bruyere minated from his position. I felt that as his superior officer you should be aware of edly said this mates that he spends on ad- his actions toward his forministrative work. Bruyere mer supervisor," Lauer said in the letter.

Lauer also provided a copy of the letter she sent to Pesta, Gerads, Verley, Cimenski and Schott. In a phone interview on May 9, Lauer said her intent by sending the letter was that to 25 hours per week, there she felt it wasn't right for a Soldo said in her report is no wonder people rarely police officer to go after an-

> "I felt that it was some-Bruyere said he spends thing that his immediate most of his time patrolling supervisor should be aware of. What he does with that ly number of hours spent information, I don't care," she said.

Lauer said she hadn't hoped her sending the letter "It can vary from one would accomplish anything results were of the investiga-

"I just don't want to be On April 5, the Council involved in what's going on.

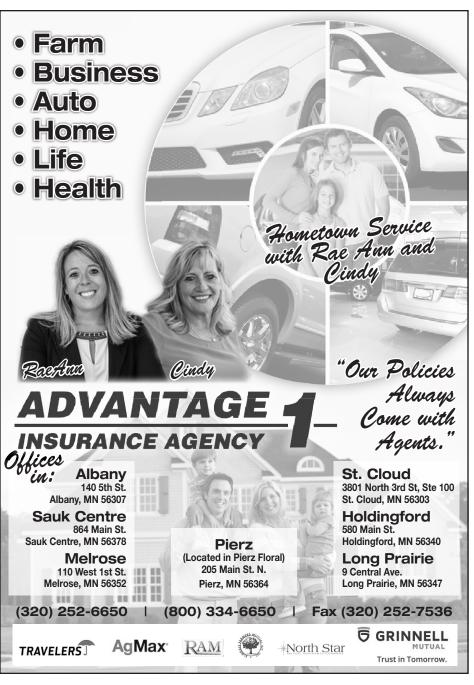
its regular council meeting, May 3. The letter said:

"I am writing this letany small town, it's the com- ter to voice my support for munity that makes the vil- the city of Royalton hiring lage. To have a vital part of a full-time police chief. In

past years, the police chief worked closely with the school district on a number of different issues and initiatives that took place over the course of a regular school year. This included: traffic safety, crisis management, mock crash simulations, presentations to students about drugs and alcohol, help with building security, guidance on security software and investigations. The (former) police chief visited the high school on a weekly basis to visit with students and staff and see how things were going with the biggest employer and largest concentration of people in any area of the city. These visits also gave me, as a building principal, insight into things that might be happening in the city and surrounding areas, that we may want to be paying attention to. A strong connection between the school district and community is very important and the availability of a full-time chief in the past was key to making those connections. I have had very good experiences working with Chief Adam Gunderson and Chief Bruyere over the years. Both have been a valuable resource for the school district and have been tremendously helpful when called upon for support. The current configuration of the police chief position has resulted in a decline of that level of services. The police chief is simply not available a lot of the time.

"Royalton sits on a very highway corridor which, unfortunately, also serves as a pipeline for drug and sex trafficking. Having a full-time police chief who works in coordination with the Sheriff's Office, State Patrol and other law enforcement agencies will help make the city of Royalton a safer place for its residents and the students who attend its schools. A full-time police chief will ensure consistent and high-quality training for all of the officers on the staff. A full-time police chief will be able to better ascertain the concerns of Royalton residents with regard to crime and ordinances within the city. Finally, a full-time police chief can set the tone and vision of what the city council and residents expect from its police department," Swenson wrote.

After discussing whether to keep the police chief po-The Council was present- sition part-time or move it proved on a 3 - 2 vote, May chief, with Cimenski, Schott and Pesta voting for and Verley and Gerads against.





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