



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CHIPPEWA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT REGARDING SHERIFF TRAVIS HAKES

On February 20, 2024, the Chippewa County Board of Supervisors voted 19-1 to declare they have no confidence in Sheriff Travis Hakes' continued leadership of the Chippewa County Sheriff's Department. The County Board made this determination after spending many hours examining two investigations directed by the Chippewa County Board and information provided by Sheriff Hakes. Some of the reasons why the Board has no confidence in Sheriff Hakes' continued leadership include:

- Sheriff Hakes targeted a female job applicant and subordinate with inappropriate communications and special treatment including texting a racist ethnically charged meme and suggesting his coworkers texted him much worse content. For any leader of a law enforcement agency to make such comments calls into question their professional judgement and ability to enforce the law and treat all persons fairly and lawfully. Moreover, for any leader of a law enforcement agency to suggest that his subordinates engage in such conduct with his implied support and tolerance leaves no doubt as to his inability to effectively manage any law enforcement employee and not expose the County to great risk.
- On December 18, 2023, the District Attorney of Chippewa County concluded that Sheriff Hakes must be identified on their *Brady/Giglio* disclosures. *Brady/Giglio* information is compiled by the District Attorney's Office containing the names and details of law enforcement officers who have had incidents of untruthfulness, criminal convictions, candor issues, or some other type of issue placing their credibility into question. The District Attorney has to disclose this information to defense counsel. In Hakes' situation, the District Attorney concluded that any impeachment of Sheriff Hakes' credibility will negatively affect the prosecution of cases involving Sheriff Hakes, and the only way to ensure that prosecutions are not negatively affected is for Sheriff Hakes to avoid actively being involved in any investigations, or handling physical evidence. The real-world consequences of Hakes' failings came to fruition already in the case involving Mitchell Ludtke.
- Sheriff Hakes misled the public and County Board regarding his historical work record in law enforcement. The investigation shows he has a long history of not being credible and other local government administration and elected officials have also lost confidence in Hakes' ability to be a part of or to lead their law enforcement agencies.

Examples of Hakes' history include:

- Hakes stated he resigned in good standing as a Patrol Officer in the City of Chetek. However, the records from Chetek and the District Attorney's office show that Hakes resigned to avoid an investigation involving his comments made to a victim suggesting that he could modify or eliminate his body cam recordings. He then entered into a separation agreement with the City of Chetek waiving any rights to be rehired by Chetek.

- While serving as the part-time Police Chief for the Village of Elk Mound, records show Hakes had to be placed on a performance plan due to his failure to be present, to follow directions given by the Board, and to perform minimum requirements of this job. According to a letter written by Hakes to the Village Board, he was given 48 hours to resign. The letter states that it was approved by the majority of the Elk Mound Board because they lost confidence in his ability to manage the Police Department.
- Sheriff Hakes made unverified public statements of discrimination about Sheriff's Department employment decisions. This caused significant damage to the credibility of the County in our efforts to recruit and retain employees, especially for the Sheriff's Department. He refused to write a retraction to his statements to the public and County Board, even after the Human Resources Director completed a full investigation that established no discrimination, retaliation or quid pro quo favoritism occurred, and after notifying him that he was dishonest to the Director during the investigation.

For the above reasons and many other reasons addressed in the investigations, Sheriff Hakes has demonstrated his negative impact on the fundamental operations of the Sheriff's Department, the District Attorney's Office, and the Chippewa County Department of Administration. This impact has also created concerns for the safety of the general public.

Therefore, the Chippewa County Board at their meeting on Tuesday, February 20, 2024, passed the following motions, on a 19-1 vote:

1. Motion for the Chippewa County Board of Supervisors to declare as follows:
 - The Chippewa County Board of Supervisor directed investigations involving Chippewa County Sheriff Travis Hakes are concluded and for the Chippewa County Administrator to forward the investigations to the Chippewa County District Attorney; and
 - The Chippewa County Board has no confidence in Chippewa County Sheriff Travis Hakes' continued leadership of the Chippewa County Sheriff's Department; and
 - To authorize and direct the County Administrator and County Board Chairperson to summarize concerns identified from the investigations and to issue a statement on behalf of the Chippewa County Board of Supervisors.
2. Motion for the Chippewa County Board of Supervisors and the Board's committees to, going forward, receive information and reports at their respective meetings, regarding Sheriff's Department administrative and law enforcement matters, from the Chief Deputy of the Sheriff's Department or the Chief Deputy's designee and not from Sheriff Travis Hakes, unless information from Sheriff Hakes is specifically requested by the Chippewa County Board of Supervisors.

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