2 more Salem officers on leave pending AG probe

Salem

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SALEM — The New Hampshire Attorney General’s office has opened criminal investigations into two more Salem police officers, according to a letter to town officials dated Thursday.

The two officers are Capt. Michael Wagner and Sgt. Michael Verrochi.

In a letter from Assistant Attorney General Geoffrey Ward to Salem Town Manager Chris Dillon and Civilian Administrator Brian Pattullo, investigators said their review of the department expanded into a criminal investigation into Wagner and Verrochi.

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“Because the investigation is active and ongoing, I am unable to provide you with any additional information at this time concerning the nature of the criminal investigation,” Ward said in the letter.

Pattullo said he learned about the investigation late on Thursday afternoon and placed the two men on paid administrative leave on Friday.

“Hopefully, we’re moving forward

Since then, Capt. Joel Dolan has been sworn in as the top officer in the department.

Pattullo said he and Dolan are currently reviewing how to structure the command staff given the loss of these key personnel. He said it will mean some people taking on additional responsibilities and, in the case of Verrochi, who is a shift supervisor, it will likely mean backfilling with overtime, at least temporarily.

Verrochi is also the head of the police union for rank and file officers.

The report outlined a pattern of mismanaged internal affairs investigations, including one led by Wagner, which reviewed the police department’s handling of a verbal fight at the ICenter in Salem following a chaotic youth hockey game in December 2017.

Police tasered and arrested youth hockey coach Robert Andersen of Wilmington, Mass., that night. Multiple witnesses say he was trying to mediate a fight between parents at the time. Police say he did not follow orders to back up and violently resisted 24 hours without talking to the complainant’s witnesses. Months later, investigators say police cherry-picked witnesses who shared the police version of events in order to arrest two other men who were involved in the ICenter incident.

Investigators said this was not a complete effort and “can even appear to be negligent or retaliatory in nature.”

Verrochi was named in an addendum of the report that described an insubordinate and antagonistic culture of the audit report, Verrochi posted a Facebook status on his public page which stated, “Wolves don’t lose sleep over the opinions of sheep.” That statement later became the ammunition for court motions filed by Andersen’s defense team, which is led by former New Hampshire Attorney General Michael Delaney.

The Union Leader and the American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire have sued to release the full, unredacted audit report.

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here,” Pattullo said. On Jan. 17, the AG’s office notified the town that Deputy Chief Robert Morin was the subject of a criminal investigation. Morin was placed on paid leave shortly after, pending the outcome of the investigation.

file officers from patrol officers to lieutenants. He was promoted to sergeant in March 2016, according to a redacted independent audit report by Kroll Inc. that was released in November.

arrest, resulting in one officer being injured. Kroll investigators say the internal review was wrapped up in less than

at the department, which often took an “us versus them” position, according to Kroll investigators.

Following the release