Enfield police chief resigns, avoids assault charge

By MARK HAYWARD

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Enfield Police Chief Richard Crate Jr. resigned from his job of 13 years on Friday, part of a deal that allows him to avoid arrest and prosecution of an allegation that he assaulted a teenage son while off duty, authorities announced.

New Hampshire State Police and Attorney General prosecutors believed they had enough evidence to charge Crate with simple assault, said Geoffrey W.R. Ward, chief of the Attorney General’s Public Integrity and Special Investigations Unit.

But they faced difficulty of winning a conviction, given the state’s parental justification law, which allows a parent’s use of force against his child if he believes it is necessary to prevent or punish misconduct, Ward said.

“I can say no weapons were involved and the allegations were a brief physical encounter,” Ward said. He would not answer additional questions, such as whether the youth needed medical attention or if Crate and the family member currently live together.

State Police received a complaint against Crate on Feb. 9. The deal called for Crate to resign on Friday. He can’t seek recertification as a police officer, he must undergo counseling, and he must apologize to the child. The state agreed to not bring charges against Crate, but reserved the right to do so if he did not live up to his end of the bargain.

Firearms were not part of the deal, Ward said.

Crate has been on paid leave from his job since March 7, the day after Enfield officials learned of the investigation, said Town Manager Ryan Aylesworth. Detective Sgt. Roy Holland has been acting as interim chief.

Aylesworth said Crate started with the department in 1989 and has been police chief since 2005.

Crate was a former president of the New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police and during his tenure was a fixture at the State House often testifying on legislation of interest to the chiefs’ group.

The town of 4,600 will conduct an open search for a new chief and expects to hear from both internal and external candidates, Aylesworth said. “We’ve been very pleased how the department’s been run under Detective Holland’s leadership during this period,” Aylesworth said. He would not comment on Crate’s performance as chief.

Crate had been budgeted to be paid $94,000 a year as chief in 2018.

Officials said Crate was off-duty when the conduct took place against a teenage boy. Crate denied committing the alleged assault but fully cooperated with the state’s investigation.

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