Epsom chief’s use of police data probed

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Computer search:

Attorney had long history of run-ins with department.

By TODD FEATHERS

New Hampshire Union Leader

EPSOM — Longtime town Police Chief Wayne Preve is under criminal investigation by the Sullivan County Attorney’s office for improperly accessing a police database to find damaging information about a local attorney.

The town’s Board of Selectmen suspended Preve for one week without pay in January, but did not disclose the reason for the discipline. But a recent decision by the Department of Labor — to which Preve appealed his suspension — shows that his misconduct stemmed from a running disagreement with Tony Soltani. The former state representative has been a frequent critic of the town’s police department.

Neither Preve nor Soltani responded to requests for comment.

On Oct. 16, 2017, “an issue arose” in court between Soltani and Epsom police Lt. Brian Michael, according to the Department of Labor decision. In a Facebook post from earlier this year, Soltani wrote that he called Michael a sex offender. Michael is not a registered sex offender.

In response to the comment, Preve then wrote a letter and sent it, along with police records.

Preve admitted to improperly using the police database and said “he would not have handed out the information he provided to the JCC to other members of the public,” continued to work with him and expect to be able to put this behind us.”

Soltani, who represented Epsom in the House from 2010 to 2012, has a long and rocky history with the town’s police department.

In recent months, Soltani has written at length on his personal Facebook page about the Epsom Police Department.

“In response to my calling Brian a sex offender, they decided to access a Mercedes, Soltani, who was a private citizen at the time, also pulled over in what he described as an attempt to assist the officer.

When the driver of the Mercedes fled, Soltani pulled back onto the highway and "In response to my calling Brian a sex offender, they decided to access a Mercedes, Soltani, who was a private citizen at the time, also pulled over in what he described as an attempt to assist the officer.

When the driver of the Mercedes fled, Soltani pulled back onto the highway and continued to work with him and expect to be able to put this behind us.”
Committee, which does not handle complaints against attorneys, sent Preve’s letter back to the town, at which point the Board of Selectmen told the chief not to refile his complaint.

The board hired a consultant from Municipal Resources Inc. to investigate Preve’s actions. MRI’s report stated that the chief appeared to have violated state privacy laws, according to the DOL decision.

The town contacted the Attorney General’s office, which referred the case to the Sullivan County Attorney for investigation due to the potential conflict of interest had the Merrimack

He served as a part-time Epsom police officer from 1987 to 1992, before becoming an attorney, then went on to hold several positions in town government; he currently serves on the budget committee.

On April 6, 2012, Epsom police arrested Soltani on a felony charge of reckless conduct after he interfered in a police chase, according to a public censure order from the state Supreme Court’s Professional Conduct Committee, which handles attorney discipline.

Soltani was convicted of lesser misdemeanors as a result of the incident.

Several months later, Epsom police arrested his teenage son for shoplifting.

“Private information about me, my children, my former spouse, and my dogs,” he wrote on Jan. 7. “They also published this information. This is an independent crime. They did this in retaliation for my exercise of my First Amendment constitutional rights.”

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