

Terry Hembree

November 12, 2024

Jeff Jones
Putnam County Attorney
1420 Neal Street
Cookeville, TN 38501

Dear Jeff,

I am writing to request a review of the enclosed complaints for consideration and presentation to the Putnam County Commission concerning Sheriff William Edward "Eddie" Farris. These complaints detail several incidents that raise concerns about ethical violations and a failure to uphold the General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. These issues indicate serious shortcomings in transparency, accountability, and the erosion of public trust—fundamental principles of the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) program, in which the sheriff's office has been involved since 2018.

Requesting an inquiry into these matters is in line with the Commission's Code of Ethics, adopted in February 2007, as there are multiple potential violations of ethical and legal standards that warrant thorough examination. The multiple violations of General Orders and ethical standards indicate potential malfeasance, misfeasance, and nonfeasance, warranting an official review in accordance with the Commission's Code of Ethics.

In 2018, the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, under Sheriff Farris's leadership, joined the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) program, which forms a membership with agencies to uphold transparency, accountability, and adherence to established policies, known as General Orders. TLEA membership, funded by taxpayer dollars, implies a public commitment to these standards. However, the actions of Sheriff Farris appear to contravene this commitment. While Sheriff Farris promotes the TLEA membership as evidence of the Sheriff's Office commitment to accountability and professionalism, the repeated failure to enforce General Orders suggests a significant disparity between public perception and actual practices within the Sheriff's Office.

Over the past several years, numerous instances of alleged violations have occurred under Sheriff Farris administration. Below is a summary of these allegations:

1. **2018:** Sheriff Farris failed to notify the Tennessee Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Commission of a deputy's resignation amid a criminal investigation, violating POST rules and General Orders.
2. **2018:** Sheriff Farris provided a political candidate with a police escort, failing to extend the same courtesy to the candidate's opponent, violating General Orders regarding political activity.

Terry Hembree

3. **2019:** Sheriff Farris mandated deputies to attend a County Commission meeting in uniform, seemingly to demonstrate solidarity in support of his budget. This necessitated the use of overtime funds, effectively misappropriating taxpayer resources.
4. **2019:** Sheriff Farris participated in a seminar in Las Vegas centered on private security and protection, which appeared to be related to his outside employment. He used an email associated with a private security firm to make reservations associated with the conference, thereby violating General Orders regarding the use of public funds.
5. **2020:** Sheriff Farris improperly responded to a Tennessee Public Records Act (TPRA) request, charging excessive fees, failing to provide an estimate, and not explaining withheld records, violating General Orders.
6. **2020:** Following the DUI arrest of a deputy in a sheriff's office vehicle, Sheriff Farris issued a vague press release, withholding crucial details and failing to update the public on an administrative investigation referenced in the press release violating General Orders regarding internal investigations.
7. **2021:** Sheriff Farris disregarded General Orders by declining to investigate a complaint involving a citizen who had received an anonymous letter seemingly linked to a public records request submitted to the Sheriff's Office.
8. **2021:** Sheriff Farris allowed the creation of a "Ban List" that unlawfully restricted certain individuals from accessing the lobby of the Sheriff's Office. This measure seemed to disproportionately affect critics of the Sheriff's Office and gave rise to concerns about potential violations of established General Orders, particularly since the "Ban List" lacked the backing of a lawful court order.
9. **2022:** Sheriff Farris neglected to investigate a command staff member for making an inquiry about a court case involving the family member of a former employee. This inquiry appeared to be retaliatory, originating from the former employee's request for public records related to the command staff member. The command staff member's inquiry appeared to be in violation of General Orders.
10. **2022:** Sheriff Farris did not discipline a non-certified command staff member who, identifying himself as sheriff's personnel, intervened in an incident in a neighboring county and acted unprofessionally, violating General Orders.
11. **2022:** In a federal lawsuit, Sheriff Farris was accused of obstructing public comments on social media accounts linked to the Sheriff's Office. In his defense, Sheriff Farris filed a sworn affidavit claiming the account in question was his personal account. However, this account contained information related to the official business of the Sheriff's Office, which is prohibited on private social media platforms according to General Orders. Furthermore, it appeared that personnel from the sheriff's office used the account to post updates related to official business.

Terry Hembree

Sheriff Farris's affidavit raises significant concerns considering the contradicting information about the use of the social media account, bringing into question concerns of possible perjury and violations of General Orders.

12. **2023:** Sheriff Farris did not ensure a safe working environment for correctional employees at the Putnam County Jail, who were subjected to hazing by their co-workers. The District Attorney reported this incident to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. Additionally, Sheriff Farris failed to disclose to the public the findings of the investigation and any disciplinary actions taken, thereby violating General Orders.
13. **December 2023:** Sheriff Farris permitted a county official to ride in an unmarked Sheriff's Office SUV equipped with flashing blue lights during a Christmas parade. The vehicle displayed signs identifying the official, who has since declared their candidacy for county mayor in 2026. This situation raises concerns about the misuse of Sheriff's Office resources for promotional purposes, potentially violating General Orders.
14. **2023:** Sheriff Farris failed to investigate deputies who escorted a school bus out of the county on a state highway during rush hour on a Friday afternoon, disrupting traffic flow and creating hazards, in violation of General Orders.
15. **2023–2024:** Numerous inmates experienced drug overdoses in the Putnam County Jail, resulting in taxpayer-funded medical costs. Sheriff Farris's failure to secure the jail violated General Orders.
16. **2024:** A violent sex offender escaped from jail near a school that was in session, yet the school was not notified and no lockdown was issued. Sources indicate that this delay was intended to reduce embarrassment for the sheriff's office and constituted a violation of General Orders.

Furthermore, other incidents included Sheriff Farris's failure to investigate fake social media accounts that were created to harass critics of the Sheriff's Office. There was also the improper handling of a firearm by a deputy, which led to an accidental discharge of a high-powered rifle, creating a safety hazard and causing damage to the Sheriff's Office command post vehicle. Additionally, Sheriff Farris hired law enforcement officers who had previously been terminated or resigned under scrutiny, thereby circumventing the General Order concerning hiring standards.

Additional Concerns Regarding Retaliation Against Whistleblowers

Sources have reported that Sheriff Farris has threatened employees to keep them from revealing internal issues within the Sheriff's Office. Sources indicate that Sheriff Farris has conducted meetings in which he cautioned employees that any leak of internal issues could lead to them "never working in law enforcement again." These actions appear retaliatory, targeting potential whistleblowers in direct violation of Tennessee's whistleblower protections (Tennessee Code Annotated 50-1-304).

Terry Hembree

Furthermore, such intimidation tactics could constitute official misconduct (Tennessee Code Annotated 39-16-402) and official oppression (Tennessee Code Annotated 39-16-403). These threats, particularly if directed at employees attempting to report legal violations, are unlawful and warrant serious investigation.

Concerns Regarding Jail Funding and Staffing Misallocation

Additionally, the recent expansion of the Putnam County Jail has resulted in millions of dollars in expenses borne by taxpayers. Sources have reported that despite requests for more personnel, the facility is reportedly critically understaffed, which has contributed to assaults on correctional officers and heightened safety risks. Sources suggest that Sheriff Farris may have redirected funds allocated for correctional staffing to other non-correctional positions, raising concerns about the potential misallocation of resources that are supposed to maintain safety within the jail.

Conclusion

In light of these allegations, the Putnam County Commission's Code of Ethics, established in 2007, requires that an Ethics Committee conduct an investigation when county officials face serious accusations. The recent indictment of the Monterey Police Chief on charges of official misconduct for the misuse of public funds underscores the seriousness of these matters and emphasizes the necessity of a comprehensive and impartial inquiry into the complaints against Sheriff Farris. As Tennessee Comptroller Jason Mumpower noted regarding the investigation of the Monterey Police Chief, these situations "raise serious ethical concerns," and the same applies to the allegations involving Sheriff Farris, as there are notable similarities between the two cases.

I want to make it clear that I am not suggesting the Monterey Police Chief is guilty of any wrongdoing; he is presumed innocent until proven guilty, just as Sheriff Farris is entitled to the same presumption. However, considering the decision to investigate the Monterey Police Chief due to serious ethical concerns, it is only fair that the same standard of principal be applied to Sheriff Farris.

I have obtained documents through public records requests that support several of these allegations, and I have attached some of them to provide additional clarity and context. The documents may not necessarily provide direct proof, but are included for related context. For example, the photo of the Sheriff's Office Command Post is included to showcase its overall appearance; however, it does not represent evidence of the damage mentioned in the complaint.

Enclosed are specific complaints that outline allegations and detail violations of certain General Orders. Furthermore, if this matter is included on the agenda of the Commission or Ethics Committee, Tennessee Public Chapter 300, enacted on July 1, 2023, permits public comments during the review process, allowing other citizens to share their insights. I believe there are members of the public who are eager to speak to the Commission about these allegations.

Terry Hembree

If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Terry Hembree



Lack of Transparency Accountability DUI Arrest of Deputy Gibbons

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint addresses the mishandling of Deputy James David Gibbons' DUI arrest while driving a sheriff's department vehicle. It highlights Sheriff Eddie Farris's lack of transparency and accountability, which appears to violate both the General Orders of the sheriff's office and the standards set by the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) program. The incomplete disclosure of the circumstances around the incident and Gibbons' subsequent resignation raises serious concerns about adherence to the Putnam County Sheriff's Office General Orders, the integrity of the process, and public trust.

Summary of Issues

1. **Arrest of Deputy James David Gibbons for DUI** In December 2020, Putnam County Deputy James David Gibbons was arrested by the Cookeville Police Department for driving under the influence (DUI) following an automobile accident in the parking lot of a local motel. Gibbons was operating a sheriff's department vehicle at the time of the accident. The incident was witnessed by Cookeville Police officers who were at the motel on an unrelated matter. Despite these circumstances, the press release issued by Sheriff Eddie Farris about Gibbons' arrest failed to disclose that Gibbons was operating a sheriff's office vehicle at the time of his DUI arrest. This omission led to incomplete and misleading information being provided to the public.
2. **Failure to Investigate and Lack of Transparency Regarding Gibbons' Resignation** Sheriff Farris stated in the press release that Deputy Gibbons was placed on paid administrative leave pending an investigation. However, records obtained through a public records request indicate that Gibbons was allowed to resign, and there was no documentation of any investigation having taken place. Additionally, Sheriff Farris did not issue any further statements about the circumstances of Gibbons' resignation, nor did he inform the public about the resignation itself, further eroding public confidence and transparency.
3. **Violation of Public Trust** Sheriff Farris, who adopted the motto "Earning the public's trust every day" when he became Sheriff in 2014, undermined public trust by withholding critical information regarding Gibbons' DUI arrest while operating a sheriff's office vehicle. This lack of transparency raises serious questions about the integrity of the Sheriff's Office and whether Sheriff Farris acted in the public's best interest by failing to disclose all relevant details about the incident.

Violations of General Orders

The actions of Deputy James David Gibbons and the subsequent actions and omissions by Sheriff Eddie Farris violate multiple General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office:

1. **General Order 320.4 - General Standards**
 - o Members are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the law at all times, whether on- or off-duty. Gibbons' arrest for DUI while operating a sheriff's department vehicle is a clear violation of this General Order, as it involves criminal conduct while in possession of office property.

Lack of Transparency Accountability DUI Arrest of Deputy Gibbons

2. **General Order 320.5.1(c) - Laws, Rules, and Orders**
 - Sheriff Farris failed to adhere to state and local regulations by not fully disclosing the DUI arrest of Deputy Gibbons while operating a sheriff's department vehicle. This omission violated the requirement to follow laws and rules that ensure transparency and accountability in law enforcement operations.
3. **General Order 320.5.2(a) - Ethics**
 - Using or disclosing one's status as a member of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in any way that could reasonably be perceived as an attempt to gain influence or authority for non-office business or activity. By failing to disclose the full details of Gibbons' arrest while operating a county vehicle, it may be perceived that the Sheriff's Office sought to protect Gibbons from further scrutiny, undermining the ethical standards of the department.
4. **General Order 320.5.6(f) - Unauthorized Access, Disclosure, or Use**
 - The resources of the sheriff's office, including vehicles and personnel, were misused in this incident. The fact that Gibbons was operating a sheriff's vehicle while intoxicated and subsequently arrested raises serious questions about the unauthorized and inappropriate use of department resources.
5. **General Order 320.5.8(i) - Performance**
 - The incident brought discredit to the Sheriff's Office, as it involved an officer engaging in illegal conduct (DUI) while using county resources. The lack of full disclosure and subsequent resignation without proper investigation further discredited the department's integrity.
6. **General Order 320.5.9(g) and (l) - Conduct**
 - Gibbons' criminal, dishonest, or disgraceful conduct while operating a sheriff's vehicle adversely affected his relationship with the office. His actions, coupled with Sheriff Farris's failure to fully investigate or disclose the details of the incident, reflect poorly on the entire Sheriff's Office. Additionally, any other conduct unbecoming of a member that reflects unfavorably on the office was clearly demonstrated in this case.
7. **General Order 320.5.11(a) and (b) - Intoxicants**
 - Gibbons reported to work impaired, which is prohibited by this General Order. Operating a sheriff's department vehicle while under the influence of alcohol constitutes a violation of this order, particularly since his ability to perform his duties was impaired.
8. **General Order 501.6.2 - County Vehicle Involved**
 - Whenever a county vehicle is involved in a traffic accident resulting in damage or injury, a report is required. The sheriff's office should have completed and forwarded a damage report to the appropriate supervisor. It is unclear whether this was done, given the lack of an investigation into the incident.
9. **General Order 1010.13 - Resignations/Retirements Prior to Discipline**
 - Deputy Gibbons was allowed to resign before any discipline was imposed, and there was no formal record indicating that an investigation occurred. This violates the requirement that a pending investigation or discipline must continue, even in the event of a resignation.

Lack of Transparency Accountability DUI Arrest of Deputy Gibbons

Recommendations

1. **Launch a Formal Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should investigate the Sheriff's Office's failure to fully disclose Deputy Gibbons' arrest and the lack of an investigation into his actions while operating a county vehicle.
2. **Ensure Transparency:** The Sheriff's Office must improve its communication with the public, especially in cases involving misconduct or criminal behavior by its members. Transparency in such cases is essential to maintaining public trust.
3. **Enforce Compliance with General Orders:** All members of the Sheriff's Office, including Sheriff Farris, must adhere to General Orders regarding transparency, reporting misconduct, and handling personnel complaints. Any deviation from these orders must be addressed to prevent further erosion of public confidence.

Conclusion

Deputy James David Gibbons' arrest for DUI while operating a sheriff's department vehicle, and the subsequent actions and omissions by Sheriff Farris, raise significant concerns about transparency, accountability, and adherence to the Putnam County Sheriff's Office General Orders. A formal investigation is necessary to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to maintain public trust and ensure that similar incidents are handled with transparency and integrity in the future.

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SIGN UP

LIVE

BREAKING NEWS ALERT

CRIME TRACKER

Longtime Putnam County deputy on paid leave after DUI arrest

by: Josh Breslow

Posted: Dec 21, 2020 / 10:33 AM CST

Updated: Dec 21, 2020 / 11:43 AM CST

PUTNAM COUNTY, Tenn. (WKRN) — A Putnam County deputy arrested over the weekend for driving under the influence has been placed on paid administrative leave.

The Putnam County Sheriff's Office said Deputy James David Gibbons was arrested by Cookeville police around 8 p.m. Sunday.

Gibbons was jailed on charges of DUI and implied consent, according to investigators. His bond was set at \$1,000.

In a statement, Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris said, "I am terribly disappointed with the decision Deputy Gibbons chose and the behavior he displayed."

The sheriff added Gibbons, who has served with the Putnam County Sheriff's Office since 1992, would be placed on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of an investigation.

CRIME TRACKER | Read the latest crime news from Middle Tennessee >

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BEST REVIEWS

Failure to Follow Hiring Practices Guidelines

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris
To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint highlights the failure of Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris to maintain standards set by the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) program, as well as his failure to comply with General Orders regarding background investigations when hiring personnel. Since the accreditation of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office by the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police in 2018, Sheriff Farris has hired multiple individuals with questionable backgrounds, disregarding the General Orders that require thorough vetting of all candidates. This hiring record reflects poorly on the Sheriff Farris's commitment to maintaining the integrity and accountability expected by TLEA standards.

Summary of Issues

1. Accreditation and Accountability Standards

- In 2018, the Putnam County Sheriff's Office was accredited by the TLEA, which emphasizes law enforcement accountability and transparency. TLEA standards require compliance with specific operational and ethical guidelines, particularly in hiring practices. However, Sheriff Farris has repeatedly failed to meet these standards by hiring individuals with records that raise questions about their suitability for public safety roles.

2. Failure to Conduct Thorough Background Investigations

- Sheriff Farris has hired individuals with questionable histories, violating the General Orders that require thorough background checks to assess candidates' character and integrity. Despite TLEA's accreditation requirements and the department's motto, "Earning the public's trust every day," these hiring decisions contradict the standards for public accountability and professionalism.

Examples of Questionable Hiring Practices

1. Hiring of Michael Ronczkowski (2018)

- In 2018, Sheriff Farris hired Michael Ronczkowski as an Administrative Major to manage the administrative operations and warrant division, even though Ronczkowski lacked certification as a law enforcement officer in Tennessee, as verified by the Tennessee Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission. His prior tenure with the Miami-Dade Police Department included an internal investigation that labeled him "an embarrassment to the department," raising serious concerns about his character and integrity. Nevertheless, he is permitted to supervise certified law enforcement personnel, carry a badge and firearm, and operate a department vehicle equipped with blue lights and siren—privileges usually reserved for certified officers.

2. Hiring of Gary Harris (2021)

- In 2021, Sheriff Farris hired Gary Harris, a former police chief from Algood, Tennessee, who had been dismissed due to questionable conduct. Evidence of Harris's misconduct included a whistleblower cell phone video showing him drinking while driving, which endangered citizens in his community. Furthermore, Harris had his private investigator's license revoked by the Tennessee licensing board in the 1990s, yet he was appointed to a detective position in the Putnam County Sheriff's Office despite this troubling background.

Failure to Follow Hiring Practices Guidelines

3. Hiring of Mia Godinez (2022)

- o In 2022, Sheriff Farris hired Mia Godinez as a deputy, despite her employment history indicating prior disciplinary actions concerning her character and integrity, as well as her termination from her last law enforcement position. Godinez had resigned from the Putnam County Sheriff's Office after an off-duty DUI incident and a vehicle accident. Following her resignation due to these circumstances, Sheriff Farris issued a statement commending her, which seemed to endorse her problematic conduct.

4. Hiring of Greg Etheredge (2023)

- o In 2023, Sheriff Farris hired Greg Etheredge, a former police chief in Livingston, Tennessee, who resigned as chief amid an investigation into missing evidence, including \$27,000 in cash, as well as his failure to report incidents of domestic violence and child abuse involving a city alderman. District Attorney Bryant Clyde Dunaway issued a letter to the Livingston Mayor and Board of Aldermen regarding a TBI investigation into Etheredge, stating, "It is the role of law enforcement to protect our citizens and actively investigate allegations of criminal conduct. That does not appear to have happened here under the leadership of Greg Etheredge." Despite these serious issues, Sheriff Farris appointed Etheredge to a detective role within the sheriff's department.

Violations of General Orders

It appears that the following General Orders were violated in Sheriff Farris's hiring practices:

1. General Order 1000.5 - Background Investigation

- o Every candidate is required to undergo a thorough background investigation to confirm personal integrity and ethical standards, which should be used to determine suitability for the role. Sheriff Farris's hiring practices demonstrate a clear failure to uphold this standard by bringing in personnel with questionable records.

2. General Order 1000.6 - Disqualification Guidelines

- o This guideline mandates evaluating candidates by considering patterns of behavior, the severity of past actions, and the probable consequences of repeated behavior. Sheriff Farris's hiring choices, involving individuals with histories that could harm public trust if repeated, contradict these guidelines.

3. General Order 1000.7 - Employment Standards

- o This standard requires candidates to meet the minimum legal and ethical requirements of the Sheriff's Office, with high standards for integrity and ethics. Sheriff Farris's appointments of personnel with concerning backgrounds do not align with these values, damaging the public's trust.

4. General Order 1000.7.1 - Standards for Deputies

- o Deputies are expected to meet the minimum moral standards as specified by Tennessee law, with background checks conducted by the office to confirm good character. Many of the individuals hired by Sheriff Farris do not meet these moral and ethical requirements, compromising the integrity of the office.

Failure to Follow Hiring Practices Guidelines

Recommendations

1. **Conduct an Internal Audit of Hiring Practices**
 - The Ethics Committee should initiate an audit of the Sheriff's Office hiring records and background checks to determine if Sheriff Farris has followed the department's guidelines for employment standards.
2. **Reevaluation of TLEA Accreditation**
 - The Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police should review the Putnam County Sheriff's Office's compliance with TLEA standards to ensure ongoing eligibility for accreditation. The continued accreditation of the department under these circumstances diminishes the value of TLEA's accountability standards.
3. **Reinforce Standards of Public Safety Employment**
 - It is recommended that the Sheriff's Office reevaluate its standards for hiring and employment, with an emphasis on upholding ethical requirements and public trust, especially in light of the questionable hires made under Sheriff Farris's leadership.

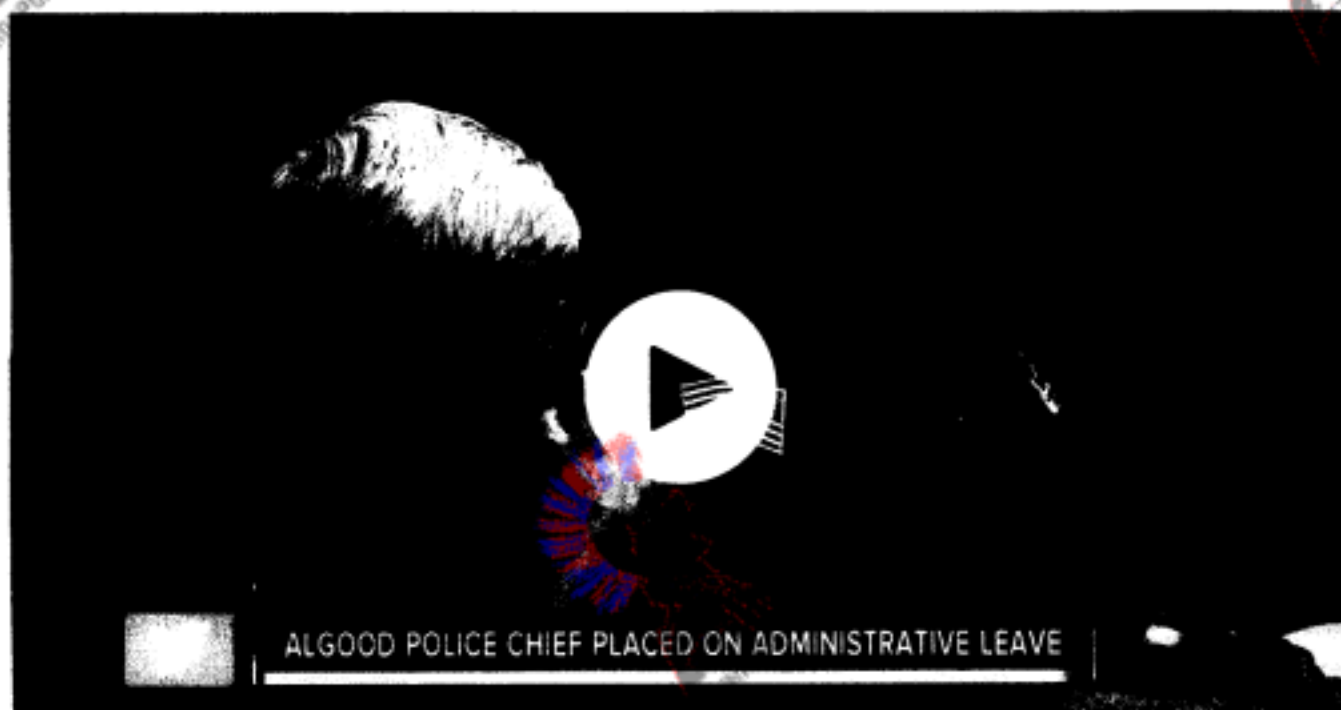
Conclusion

Sheriff Eddie Farris's hiring practices have repeatedly violated the General Orders regarding background investigations, and they do not reflect the values of accountability and transparency required by TLEA standards. The Ethics Committee should investigate these hiring practices to ensure accountability and to uphold the public's trust in the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

NEWS



Algood Police Chief On Administrative Leave



The Algood Police Chief has been placed on administrative leave, after scathing images, and audio recordings of potential police misconduct were handed over to the city council.

By: Kimberly Davis

Posted 6:28 PM, Mar 10, 2017 and last updated 8:15 PM, Mar 10, 2017



to the city council.

"A lot of people could be afraid when you're dealing with elected officials or sworn officers," said Brett Knight, Fry & Fry Attorneys at Law.

He was referencing scared citizens, afraid of what the consequences may be for blowing the whistle on a man sworn to protect and uphold the law.

"I was surprised when I first had the information brought to me. For sure, I was very surprised. I hold law enforcement in very high esteem," said Knight.

Attorney Brett Knight was shocked when the police misconduct evidence swarmed into his office.

One of the whistle blowers showed Knight cell phone video, which showed Algood Police Chief Gary Harris drinking while driving, putting citizens in his own city in danger.

That documented information didn't just stop at the videos. There were also hours of inappropriate conversations, even discussing some of the women on his own force.

"The detective is joking that he's going to tell the Sergeant that in order for her to get promoted she's going to have to do something with the Chief. Something dirty his quote. And the Police Chief is laughing about it and finding it quite funny," said Knight.

But there was one conversation Knight found even more disturbing.

As the acts that have been done in the dark came to light, Algood residents were hopeful that Police Chief Harris would be held accountable.

"I think they're still nervous about how this is going to play out but they're optimistic that the city council and the mayor are going to do the right thing," said Knight.

NewsChannel 5 reached out to Police Chief Harris and his attorney, but they both declined to comment.

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← Details for HARRIS, GARY DEWAYNE

License details for the selected record

Summary

License
3562

Private Investigator
Private Investigators
Private Investigation

Status
Revoked

Expiration Date
09/30/1999

Original Licensure Date
09/25/1995

Status Effective Date
09/25/1995

Rank Effective Date
09/25/1995

Modifiers

Alert

Has Been Charged



Comptroller finds issues in LPD

Posted Thursday, June 2, 2022

BY MEGAN REAGAN

The Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury released an investigative report Thursday that detailed several deficiencies in the Livingston Police Department after investigators were unable to locate \$27,000 in cash from the evidence room.

According to the report, the cash was missing from the department's evidence room where only the captain, evidence custodian and Police Chief Greg Etheredge were supposed to have access.

"Both the evidence custodian and the former captain stated they had, at times, 'borrowed' cash for personal purchases and would later pay back the 'borrowed' funds," a press release stated.

Investigators, however, were unable to determine the amount improperly "borrowed" by the custodian and former captain.

According to the report, other unauthorized individuals had the ability to easily access the evidence locker.

The report states that the key to the evidence room was kept in the dispatch room for some time, and at one point an inmate trustee had access.

In addition to the missing funds, Etheredge failed to "provide adequate oversight" to the evidence custodian which resulted in improperly logged evidence, according to the report.

"Due to the inaccuracy in the documentation for case files, investigators were unable to determine the legitimacy and accuracy of evidence records provided by the department," the report said. "The inability to determine the legitimacy and accuracy of evidentiary records makes seized evidence more susceptible to misappropriation and potential chain of custody and admissibility issues in criminal cases."

According to the press release issued Thursday, Etheredge had knowledge of evidence-related issues in 2019, but an independent inventory of the evidence room was not conducted until February of 2021.

"The chief made only one corrective action as a result of the evidence room inventory, issuing a new directive in which all seized cash must be turned over directly to the chief," the report said.

District Attorney Bryant C. Dunaway said his office received these investigative findings from the Comptroller and that he has "great concern over the mismanagement of evidence and currency" by the LPD.

"There appears to be a complete lack of adherence to policy and best practices related to evidence and currency accountability," he said. "Currency was left stored for long periods of time in various locations in the LPD in areas and under conditions where any number of persons had access. In addition, there are no records or insufficient records documenting alleged forfeited currency."

Dunaway said it is his strong belief that theft of funds occurred.

"It was also my desire to initiate criminal charges to hold the responsible party accountable," he said. "Unfortunately, due to the total lack of controls, lack of records, failure to follow policy and wide open access, it is impossible to prove who may have taken the currency and when it may have been taken."

He said the conditions revealed by this investigation jeopardized every criminal case where evidence has been stored.

"This is an awful circumstance which must be corrected immediately," Dunaway said. "I strongly suggest that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen immediately seek outside assistance and conduct a full and complete inventory of the department. This police agency must then implement a proper inventory system and evidence control system."

In addition to the missing funds from evidence, Comptroller investigators also determined the department's drug fund was misused.

Etheredge deposited at least \$352,906.53 into the drug fund that had been derived from the sale of various department vehicles, and he received approximately \$41,781.69 in improper reimbursements.

The Board of Mayor and Aldermen also voted in favor of selling the equipment and the improper placement of the proceeds into the drug fund.

Livingston Police Chief Greg Etheredge and Mayor Curtis Hayes have not responded to requests for comment at this time.

DA releases TBI investigation detailing mishandling of Livingston 'domestic abuse' incident

Posted Tuesday, August 23, 2022

BY MEGAN REAGAN

13th Judicial District Attorney General Bryant Dunaway released a letter Monday detailing an alleged domestic violence case involving a former elected Livingston official that went unreported and was not investigated.

According to Dunaway's letter, the three-year-old incident was brought to his attention in June after LPD Sgt. Bruce Matthews asked for a meeting to discuss concerns involving former Livingston Alderman Chris Speck, his family and Livingston Police Chief Greg Etheredge.

Dunaway said a copy of body cam footage dated May 13, 2019, that depicts Wendy Speck — Chris Speck's wife — reporting a domestic situation to a female LPD officer inside of a patrol vehicle.

"Wendy Speck asks the officer to call the Police Chief Greg Etheredge," Dunaway said. "The video captures a conversation between [Etheredge] and [Wendy]."

Dunaway said Wendy discloses to Etheredge a domestic violence incident involving her husband and the couple's now 18-year-old daughter, Emma.

"He's just hurting me, and I can't do it every night," Wendy said in the video footage during a phone conversation with Etheredge. "My babies are in the house. Things didn't go good tonight. I love Chris, and I know you love Chris, but things hurt. If you go upstairs in the carriage house, there's a hole in the wall where Emma's head went through it. He hurt her tonight."

Etheredge is then heard on the video telling Wendy to have the officer take her to his personal residence.

Dunaway said after viewing the video, he was concerned that no investigation had been conducted regarding the allegations of domestic and child abuse, and he requested the assistance of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation to look into the matter.

"There is no police report or record, other than the video, that documents this alleged domestic report in the records of the LPD," Dunaway said.

He also said no report was made to the Department of Children's Services of the alleged child abuse, which is required by law.

According to Dunaway, the TBI's investigation revealed that the responding officer, Connie Nardozi, was not aware that no reports were made and later told another officer that she was upset because "nothing was being done about the incident."

"This office is very concerned over the handling of this incident," Dunaway said. "It is the role of law enforcement to actively investigate allegations of criminal conduct. That does not appear to have happened here."

Dunaway said that he can't speak to whether or not the allegations of abuse by Speck are true, but it is concerning that no investigation was conducted. He said in the letter that the criminal offenses of Official Misconduct and Failure to report suspected child abuse "were committed."

"Unfortunately, because this incident occurred on May 13, 2019 ... the applicable statute of limitations has expired," he said.

Chris Speck, Wendy and Emma all reached out to the Herald-Citizen Monday to offer their perspective on the incident.

"Three years ago when I was 15, not even a sophomore in high school, I made a stupid decision," Emma said. "My dad got mad at me, rightfully so, and so did my mom. Nobody was harmed and no head was put through a wall."

"This feels crazy even talking about," she added. "That evening there were many emotions shared, and everyone just needed a minute to breathe. There were a lot of things said that night that weren't true as well."

According to Wendy, Emma was having an unsupervised get-together with people who were not allowed to be over.

"Being very shocked and angry, there were words exchanged and kids were told to leave immediately," Wendy said. "Emma's head was not pushed through a wall, [Chris] did yell at her, and I was angry at him for being so abrasive with yelling."

In regard to the statements she made to the officer that night, Wendy said nothing happened as she said it did.

"I know how that may look to most people that I'm now saying that wasn't true to protect [Chris] and my reputation and all. But it seriously didn't happen," she said. "[Chris] and I went through a rough patch during COVID, and I struggled with drinking a little too much, which I received help for. And things now are so much better. I guess that's the worst part of all this. Just when things are better and I'm better, all this comes storming in."

Both Wendy and Emma said the last few months have been extremely hard on the Speck family.

"We have seen so many people that we have always loved and stick up for turn on us," Emma said.

Etheredge has not yet returned requests for comment.

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DISCIPLINARY ACTION REPORT
(Continuation)

MICHAEL RONCZKOWSKI

POLICE LIEUTENANT

SEPTEMBER 17, 1996

PAGE 3

FACTS:

In August 1995, you became the subject of an investigation by the Professional Compliance Bureau, IA Case #95-333, that was based on a complaint filed by Sergeant Hollis Smith and Sergeant Debra Melgar. At the time of the complaint, both of the complainants were assigned to the Warrants Bureau. You were also assigned to the Warrants Bureau as the Lieutenant supervising the day shift. The complainants (Sergeants Smith and Melgar) both alleged that your treatment toward them as female employees was unfair and it differed from that given male employees. The complainants also alleged you created a hostile working environment by retaliating against them because they filed a formal complaint. A Departmental Disposition Panel convened for the purpose of determining the disposition of the allegations made against you. After a review of the case, the panel classified the allegations as **NOT SUSTAINED**, as there was insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegations.

During the course of the investigation, however, additional information was disclosed and resulted in a classification of **SUSTAINED** in the panel's Other Findings. The investigation revealed that you engaged in a course of conduct that constituted a violation of departmental policy other than the original allegations. Information was related concerning your reference to a female employee in an unprofessional manner and that you had to be counseled on your insensitivity to the feelings of others. The information also stated that you have made derogatory remarks on an off the job, about females, blacks, and other minority groups, including officers. It was the Disposition Panel's determination that your remarks were obviously biased and directed against the opposite sex or race, and that you were inclined to not hold minority groups in high regard. You also made remarks concerning your misgivings about Sergeant Smith's ability to carry out her supervisory duties, based on her gender. In view of the totality of events and commentaries, your behavior shows a pattern of indefensible conduct that denotes an absence of professional bearing. This type of conduct cannot be tolerated from any employee of the Metro-Dade Police Department and most especially not from an employee in a supervisory capacity. Your behavior clearly displays a grave insensitivity to minority groups and sincere doubt as to your ability to further supervise employees of the Department. The Metro-Dade Police Department is multi-cultural and ethnically diverse in nature and is clearly committed to and supportive of Affirmative Action guidelines. You should seriously re-evaluate your role and responsibilities as a mid-management supervisor with the Metro-Dade Police Department. Your conduct has been an embarrassment to yourself, your supervisors, and the Department. You have portrayed an extremely poor role model for your subordinates and the Department. You are, therefore, directed to review and become thoroughly familiar with Administrative Order 2-18, General Conduct.

LEBANON

www.lebanonpolice.org

NILE JUSTICE, CHIEF OF POLICE

1817 Sports Plaza

Lebanon, Tennessee 37087

(615) 244-3323

(615) 244-3980

RICK BELL, MAYOR

200 Castle Heights Avenue North

Suite 100

Lebanon, Tennessee 37087

Mike Godinez

Mike Godinez:

On Tuesday, July 12, 2022, a departmental hearing was held to discuss the following policy violations.

VIOLATION OF CHARGE

Violation of City of Lebanon Employee Handbook, Rule XDC: Code of Ethics, Section 22-112 (Appearance of Impropriety) that states:

All at times, every City of Lebanon employee or official, whether elected or appointed, shall conduct himself or herself in a manner so as to avoid even the appearance of any impropriety.

Violation of Lebanon Employee Handbook, Rule X: Separation, Disciplinary Action, and Suspension, Section 5, Rule 52 that states:

...interference, immoral conduct, insubordination, failure to adhere to rules and regulations or written instructions, other acts of omission or commission tending to injure the public service, or any other willful failure on the part of the employee to conduct himself or herself properly.

Violation of Lebanon Police Department General Order V-HH (Conduct Unbecoming an Officer / Employee) that states:

A police officer/employee is the most conspicuous representative of the government. To the majority of the people they serve, they are a symbol of stability and authority. An officer's/employee's conduct is more closely scrutinized than any other individual in the community. Therefore, their conduct and appearance, whether on or off duty, will be such that it will not reflect badly of them, nor will it bring discredit to themselves, the Department, or the City. This will include all acts or misconduct that bring the Department into disrepute or discredit the individual as a member of the Lebanon Police Department.

On June 28, 2022, members of the Lebanon Police Department began an investigation into reports of an alleged domestic trouble situation at the home of Officer Brady Greene located inside the city limits of Lebanon, Tennessee. The supervisor investigating this complaint located your vehicle at Officer Greene's residence and did witness you inside your vehicle in the driveway of his residence

during his investigation. The allegation from Greene's wife was that you were the cause of their domestic trouble on this date. This situation was referred to Internal Affairs investigators who immediately commenced an investigation. During this investigation, Officer Greene was untruthful about you being inside the home during the initial investigation and ultimately resigned his position from the Jackson Police Department. During your subsequent interview, you did admit to spending the night at the home in a room with Brady Greene while his wife was there. Your actions and conduct do the appearance of impropriety and do bring discredit to this department.

I have reviewed the items indicated under Notice of Charges. I have reviewed the evidence submitted regarding these policy violations. I have considered the findings from the investigation conducted by Sergeant Mosley and Sergeant Brown as well as your statements and responses in the hearing. The charges are credible, the policy violations occurred, and these violations warrant disciplinary action.

As a probationary employee, I feel that your actions during this investigation make you unable to successfully complete your probationary period. Therefore, it is my decision to terminate your employment immediately.

Every newly hired full time employee or a part time or seasonal employee promoted to fill a classified position within the city service must successfully complete a probationary period before becoming a classified employee. The probationary period is a "work test" period, lasting 6 months (12 months for firefighters, law enforcement and police dispatch), from the date of appointment or promotion. During this period, the probationary employee's work is being evaluated so that the Department may determine whether or not the employee is capable and willing to perform his or her duties in a satisfactory manner.

The Department Head may take certain action if, in his or her opinion, the probationary employee is unable to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position. A new employee hired during the probationary period will be dismissed from city service during the probationary period. No employee may be rehired at any time, without cause and without an appeal or review. The decision of the Department Head is final.

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF EMPLOYMENT SECURITY
SEPARATION NOTICE

1. Employee's Name: 1st Godinez 2. SSN:

3. Last Employed From: 02/24/22 to 07/14/22 Occupation: Police Officer
(mm/dd/yy) (mm/dd/yy)
4. Where was work performed? City of Lebanon

Reason for Separation: ☐ Lack of Work ☐ Discharge ☐ Quit

If quit, indicate if layoff is

☐ Permanent ☐ Temporary

Otherwise, what do you expect to recall this individual? Date

If temporary, report any vacation pay that will be paid. Week Ending Date Amount
(mm/dd/yy)

If layoff is indefinite, vacation pay should not be reported.

If other than lack of work, explain the circumstances of this separation:

Involuntary Termination 07/14/22

Employer's Name: City of Lebanon

Address where additional information may be obtained:

200 N. Church Street, Room

 State TN Code 37087

Telephone Number: (615) 443-3808 2215
(Area Code) (Number) (Ext)

Employer's E-mail: john.barnes@cityoflebanon.org

EMPLOYER'S ACCOUNT NUMBER

06806677

(Number shown on State Quarterly Wage Report (LS-9837) and
Premium Report (LS-9452))

I certify that the above worker has been separated from work.
Information furnished herein is true and correct.
This report has been handed to or mailed to the worker.

Signature of Official or Representative of the Employer
who has first-hand knowledge of this separation:

Title of Official/Signer

Date Completed and Signed

07/14/22
(mm/dd/yy)

Mandatory Attendance – Putnam County Commission Meeting

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris
To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint addresses the conduct of Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris, who violated standards of the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) program and the General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office by mandating all deputies to attend a Putnam County Commission meeting in uniform. This meeting, held on July 29, 2019, was for discussing the 2019-2020 budget for the Sheriff's Department, and Sheriff Farris allegedly required deputies to attend in uniform as a show of support, despite the appearance being mandatory and overtime-funded. This action represents an abuse of power and misuse of public funds, costing taxpayers unnecessary overtime pay. Further, Sheriff Farris engaged in a heated, unprofessional exchange with a county commissioner during the meeting, an act unbecoming of an elected official and contrary to his oath of office. This incident was captured on video.

Summary of Issues

1. **Improper Use of Authority for Personal Gain**
 - o Sheriff Farris required all deputies to attend the commission meeting in uniform, appearing to use his position to leverage support for his budget. The deputies were mandated to appear, resulting in overtime pay funded by taxpayers. This represents an unethical and improper use of authority and resources.
2. **Unprofessional Conduct and Disrespectful Treatment**
 - o During the meeting, Sheriff Farris engaged in a heated exchange with a county commissioner over items in his budget. This behavior demonstrated a lack of respect for duly constituted authority and is unbecoming of a public official. His conduct is contrary to the standards of professionalism expected of law enforcement officers.

Violations of General Orders

It appears that Sheriff Farris's actions violated the following General Orders:

1. **General Order 320.3.1 - Unlawful or Conflicting Orders**
 - o This order prohibits issuing directives that would lead to a violation of law or misuse of office resources. Sheriff Farris mandated deputies to attend the meeting under overtime pay to support his agenda. This misuse of authority for personal leverage over the budget process constitutes a violation of this General Order.
2. **General Order 320.4 - General Standards**
 - o Members are required to conduct themselves in compliance with applicable laws and rules. Mandating deputy attendance for personal gain at a county meeting in uniform does not align with the standards for law enforcement officers, particularly those involving taxpayer funds and fair budget discussions.
3. **General Order 320.5.2 - Ethics**
 - o **Section (b):** Sheriff Farris exercised unlawful authority by using overtime funds to coerce deputies into appearing at a commission meeting for his benefit, violating T.C.A. § 39-16-402.

Mandatory Attendance – Putnam County Commission Meeting

- **Section (f):** This action misappropriated public funds and misused personnel services, further demonstrating a disregard for ethical standards.
 - **Section (g):** By failing to uphold ethical conduct in this matter, Sheriff Farris also neglected the TLEA standards for accountability and transparency.
- 4. General Order 320.5.8 - Performance**
- **Section (e):** Sheriff Farris's conduct, especially the heated exchange with a commissioner, disrupted the efficiency of his office, subverting good order and damaging public perception.
 - **Section (i):** This on-duty behavior brought discredit to the office, impacting both public trust and department morale.
- 5. General Order 320.5.9 - Conduct**
- **Section (e):** Sheriff Farris's disrespectful exchange with a county commissioner displayed discourteous treatment of a public official, further damaging public confidence in the Sheriff's Office.
 - **Section (l):** Mandating deputies to attend the meeting and his unprofessional conduct with the commissioner reflected unfavorably upon the office, showing a disregard for ethical responsibilities.

Recommendations

- 1. Internal Audit of Overtime Spending**
 - The Ethics Committee should conduct an audit of overtime pay records to assess if similar instances have occurred where overtime was misused to influence public proceedings.
- 2. Review of TLEA Accreditation Compliance**
 - A review should be conducted to ensure the Putnam County Sheriff's Office is complying with TLEA accreditation standards, particularly those related to ethical conduct and proper use of authority.
- 3. Implementation of Ethical Training for Leadership**
 - Sheriff Farris and department leadership should undergo mandatory training in ethical standards, including guidelines on the appropriate use of public resources and professional conduct in public forums.

Conclusion

Sheriff Eddie Farris's actions during the July 29, 2019, commission meeting represent a breach of ethical standards and misuse of office authority, with significant financial implications for taxpayers. The Ethics Committee is urged to investigate these practices to restore accountability, protect public resources, and uphold the integrity of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

Public Safety Endangerment/Mismanagement of Jail Escape

Formal Complaint Against Sheriff Eddie Farris
To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint highlights serious concerns about Sheriff Eddie Farris's mismanagement of a violent sex offender's escape from the Putnam County Jail on January 26, 2024. This incident has raised substantial alarms regarding community safety, particularly given the jail's close proximity to an elementary school that was in session at the time of the escape. There has also been a failure to adhere to the standards and guidelines set by the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA), along with a lack of transparency and accountability to the public.

Summary of Incident

On January 26, 2024, a violent sex offender escaped from the Putnam County Jail because of inadequately implemented security measures by the staff. According to sources, the escape went unnoticed for several hours while the jail was just two blocks away from an elementary school. The failure to promptly inform the public and the apparent efforts to downplay the incident have raised significant concerns regarding community safety, particularly for the students and staff at the nearby school. Sources also reported that a Cookeville Police officer was in the area and observed Putnam County deputies searching for the escapee but was not invited to assist. When the Cookeville officer inquired about the situation, a deputy replied, "You don't want to know," refusing to provide any specifics regarding the escapee. This suggests a possible attempt to withhold critical information from other law enforcement agencies.

The negligence exhibited during this incident, combined with the lack of cooperation among law enforcement, not only jeopardized public safety but also violated the ethical obligations of law enforcement to work collaboratively during emergencies.

Violations of General Orders:

1. **General Order 904.1 - Policy:** The Sheriff's Office failed to maintain a correctional facility that meets state standards, particularly regarding securing the jail against escape.
2. **General Order 904.2 - Procedures:** The failure to properly handle the inmate escape compromised the integrity of the correctional system, damaging community trust in law enforcement.
3. **General Order 904.3 - Correctional Facility:** Inmate management and security procedures were not properly executed, as evidenced by the escape and insufficient monitoring.
4. **General Order 900.8 - Holding Cells:** Protocols for conducting thorough inspections and safety checks were evidently not followed, allowing for a breach of security.
5. **Failure to Follow Emergency Procedures:** The sheriff's office did not adhere to established procedures for handling escape situations, which may have included notifying neighboring law enforcement agencies and taking immediate steps to secure the area.

Public Safety Endangerment/Mismanagement of Jail Escape

Additional Concerns

- Sheriff Farris's apparent decision to conceal the escape from the public and his attempts to manage the situation without assistance from other law enforcement agencies indicate a concerning priority on protecting his office's reputation rather than ensuring public safety.
- The lack of effective communication and cooperation among law enforcement personnel during this emergency poses a severe risk to the community.

Recommendations:

1. **Conduct a Thorough Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should initiate an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the escape, including Sheriff Farris's actions and the failures of the jail staff.
2. **Assess Accountability:** Determine the extent of Sheriff Farris's knowledge regarding the escape and evaluate the adequacy of his response in ensuring public safety.
3. **Implement Improved Communication Protocols:** Establish clear protocols for communication and cooperation between the Putnam County Sheriff's Office and local law enforcement agencies during emergency situations.
4. **Enhance Training:** Provide additional training for jail staff on security protocols, emergency response procedures, and the importance of collaboration with other law enforcement agencies.
5. **Restore Public Trust:** Transparency about the incident and the subsequent investigation is essential for restoring public confidence in the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

Conclusion:

The handling of the escape incident by Sheriff Eddie Farris and his deputies raises significant ethical concerns regarding public safety and transparency. The apparent failures in communication and cooperation, coupled with the lack of adherence to established General Orders, call into question Sheriff Farris's leadership and commitment to the values of the Sheriff's Office. It is essential that the Ethics Committee thoroughly investigate this matter to ensure accountability and restore public trust in the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

Harassment of Citizens on Fake Social Media Accounts

Formal Complaint Against Sheriff Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint pertains to discriminatory practices, harassment, and the inappropriate use of social media to target individuals who have voiced criticism of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office under Sheriff Eddie Farris. Such actions represent significant ethical breaches that warrant prompt investigation and violate the standards set by the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) as well as the General Orders of the sheriff's office.

Summary of Issues

1. Harassment via Fake Social Media Accounts

Many citizens who have openly criticized the Sheriff's Office have been targeted by fake social media accounts. These accounts have spread defamatory and derogatory comments about these individuals and their associates. For instance, a person who filed a federal lawsuit against the Sheriff's Office received a disturbing message referencing his girlfriend, stating, "Don't poke the bear." Soon after, a previous court citation for this individual was shared on one of the fake accounts. It was later revealed that a command staff member from the Sheriff's Office, Major Micheal Ronczkowski, had requested a copy of the citation from the originating law enforcement agency through a public records request.

2. Threats Targeting Associates of Critics

In additional incidents, personal information about the associates of Sheriff's Office critics was maliciously shared, leading to potential threats and harassment. For instance, a citizen's girlfriend had her workplace location disclosed on a fake social media account, accompanied by inappropriate remarks suggesting she might perform sexual favors related to her job. Similarly, a resident of Putnam County who works out of state also had details about her job location posted on a fraudulent account, intensifying the harassment. These actions illustrate a deliberate pattern of targeting individuals connected to those who openly criticize the Sheriff's Office.

3. Misuse of Personal Information

As a former employee of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, I have submitted public records requests and, regrettably, have become a target of fake social media accounts. In one instance, my wife's driver's license photo was uploaded to a fake social media account and misrepresented as a mugshot, damaging her reputation. This situation clearly highlights how personal information can be misused for harassment and retaliation.

4. Failure to Investigate Harassment

Despite substantial evidence of harassment, Sheriff Farris has declined to investigate the activities of these fraudulent social media accounts. His inaction raises serious questions about his dedication to maintaining the ethical standards of his office and safeguarding the First Amendment rights of citizens who voice their criticism.

Harassment of Citizens on Fake Social Media Accounts

Violations of General Orders

The conduct of Sheriff Farris and his failure to investigate these issues violate multiple General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office:

1. **General Order 320.4 - General Standards**

- Members of the Sheriff's Office are expected to act in compliance with the United States and Tennessee Constitutions, as well as applicable laws. The failure to address the harassment and defamation occurring through fake social media accounts violates these standards.

2. **General Order 320.5.2 - Ethics**

- This order prohibits the wrongful or unlawful exercise of authority for malicious purposes. Sheriff Farris's refusal to investigate the misuse of public records and personal information for the purpose of defamation reflects a failure to uphold ethical standards.

3. **General Order 320.5.3 - Discrimination, Oppression, or Favoritism**

- Targeting citizens based on their public criticism of the Sheriff's Office, along with the inappropriate disclosure of personal information about their associates, violates this order. The harassment of individuals based on their associations or criticisms constitutes oppression and favoritism.

4. **General Order 320.5.9 - Conduct**

- This order requires members to report activities that may result in criminal prosecution or disciplinary action. The refusal to investigate the illegal use of public records and the harassment of citizens who criticize the Sheriff's Office violates this order. Furthermore, the disrespectful treatment of citizens, as evidenced by the content of these fake social media accounts, is unacceptable.

5. **General Order 1010 - Personnel Complaints**

- The Sheriff's Office is required to accept and investigate all complaints regarding misconduct. The refusal to address the harassment and targeting of citizens through fake social media accounts undermines the integrity of the Sheriff's Office and its responsibility to the community.

Additional Concerns

The deliberate inaction of Sheriff Farris in investigating these serious allegations indicates a disregard for the ethical responsibilities of his position. The targeting of citizens who exercise their right to free speech and the use of personal information to harass individuals and their associates is a clear abuse of power. Sheriff Farris's failure to address these issues not only violates the ethical standards of law enforcement but also threatens the public trust in the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

Recommendations

- Initiate a Full Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should immediately open an investigation into the fake social media accounts and the involvement of any members of the Sheriff's Office in these incidents.
- Disciplinary Action:** Any staff involved in the creation or maintenance of these fake social media accounts should be subject to appropriate disciplinary measures.

Harassment of Citizens on Fake Social Media Accounts

3. **Strengthen Policy Enforcement:** The Sheriff's Office should implement stronger safeguards to protect citizens from retaliation and ensure that public records are not misused for malicious purposes.

Conclusion

The targeting of citizens through fake social media accounts, the misuse of public records, and the failure to investigate these serious matters reflect a deep ethical failure in the leadership of Sheriff Farris. It is essential that the Ethics Committee conduct a thorough investigation and hold those responsible accountable to restore the integrity of the Sheriff's Office and protect the rights of the citizens it serves.

luzerville babies

All

Posts

People

Reels

Groups

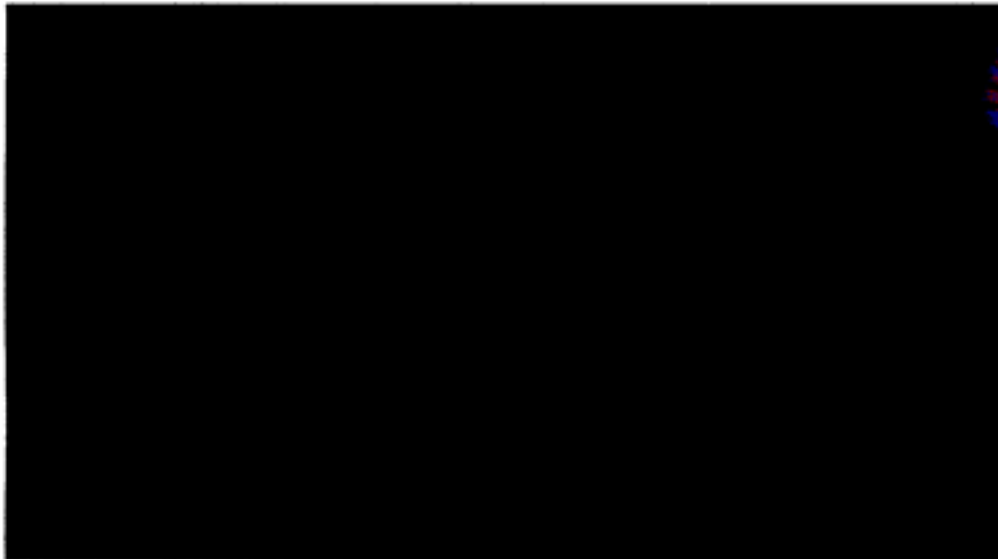
Pages

**Luzerville Babies**

1d ·



Our journalists have been speaking with Regina and the officers that arrested Joan and would like to know if Terry has anything to say - that is if he isn't too far up the punks azzzzz to have time to respond.



Like



Comment



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**Luzerville Babies**

Dec 30, 2023 ·



Former coworker of the Punk or his group of clowns?

Current or former neighbor of the Punk or his group of clowns?

Being harassed and or stalked by the Punk or his



Home



Video



Friends



Marketplace



Notifications



Menu



Luzerville Babies



Posts

Photos



Luzerville Babies

2h · 🌐



SEEKING INFORMATION FOR CRIMINAL CHARGES

We have been contacted and asked to reach out to our tipsters for specific information regarding Robert CHASE MATHESON (Patriot Punk), Daniel Lee Wagner, and James Randall Blankenship that can assist with information in or set to support a criminal case against them.

Let's not forget their associates like Terry, Kathy, Teresa, Rob, Jennifer, and the several others that support and help

Tipsters have reported possession of drugs, harassment, stalking, misuse and not reporting income and even sexual misconduct.

Do U have the information that our tipster needs?

Sumner County Schools, Tennessee Benton County Sheriff's Office Putnam County TN Republican Party Cumberland County Schools, Crossville, TN Cumberland County, TN Coffee County, TN Readyville, Tennessee Putnam County, TN Courthouse Jennifer Wilkerson Putnam County Circuit Court Clerk Rutherford County Schools Rutherford County TN Schools and Personnel History Overton County TN Tullahoma Police Department



Add friend



Message



Home



Video



Friends



Marketplace



Notifications



Menu

Failure to Properly Address Accidental Discharge of Firearm

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris
To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint addresses the failure of Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris to uphold public safety and adhere to Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) standards following an on-duty firearm discharge by a deputy. Despite the Sheriff Department's accreditation by TLEA in 2018, Sheriff Farris neglected to follow General Orders relating to the discharge of a firearm, putting public safety at risk and displaying a disregard for proper firearms handling protocols.

Summary of Incident

While on duty, a deputy from the Putnam County Sheriff's Department discharged his patrol rifle at the county school bus garage, which features multiple fueling islands for the purpose of refueling county vehicles, including Sheriff's Office vehicles. For reasons still unknown, the deputy took his rifle out of the patrol vehicle, aimed it at the Sheriff's Department Command Post, and fired, causing considerable property damage. The bullet went through the Command Post's windshield, damaged the seats, and hit the interior walls. The expenses for the repairs were borne by taxpayers. This incident reveals multiple safety and procedural violations, indicating a breach of the essential firearm handling training that deputies receive annually.

Key Safety Concerns

1. **Unsafe Firearm Handling**
 - o Deputies are trained to handle all firearms as if loaded, performing safety checks before handling. Handling the rifle and discharging it at the fuel island disregarded these procedures, endangering both the deputy and nearby personnel.
2. **Proximity to Fuel Pumps**
 - o The discharged of a firearm near fuel pumps emitting flammable fumes could have ignited upon contact with the rifle's muzzle flash, presenting a substantial fire hazard.
3. **Public Safety at Risk**
 - o Across the street from the garage is a Walmart shopping center, frequented by the public. If the rifle had been pointed in that direction, it could have posed a severe risk of injury or death.
4. **Lack of Proper Reporting and Accountability**
 - o Sheriff Farris failed to address or publicly report the incident, keeping it quiet to avoid potential embarrassment, undermining public trust, and violating his duty to enforce disciplinary standards within his office.

Violations of General Orders

1. **General Order 203.4.1 - In-Service Mandated Training**
 - o Deputies are required to complete firearms training, including safe handling, yet this incident reflects a disregard for these standards and protocols.
2. **General Order 306.2 - Firearms Policy**
 - o The Sheriff's Office is responsible for ensuring deputies handle firearms safely to protect public safety. The Sheriff's failure to enforce this policy places the public at risk.

Failure to Properly Address Accidental Discharge of Firearm

3. **General Order 306.5 - Safe Handling, Inspection, and Storage**
 - **Section (a):** Prohibits unnecessary firearm handling. The deputy's actions in handling the rifle at the fuel station were unnecessary and unsafe.
 - **Section (c):** Firearms may not be loaded or unloaded except in designated areas; handling firearms at a fuel island violated this policy.
4. **General Order 306.6 - Firearms Training and Qualifications**
 - This policy mandates annual firearms training and adherence to proper handling techniques. The deputy's actions suggest a lack of training reinforcement or failure in Sheriff Farris's oversight.
5. **General Order 306.7 - Firearm Discharge**
 - This order mandates that any discharge of a firearm be reported verbally to a supervisor. The Sheriff's failure to make this incident public demonstrates a disregard for transparency.
6. **General Order 320.5.7 - Efficiency**
 - **Section (a):** Neglect of duty. Sheriff Farris neglected his duty by failing to address the safety violations in this incident, impacting the efficiency and credibility of his office.
7. **General Order 320.5.10 - Safety**
 - **Section (a):** Violates safe working practices and standards.
 - **Section (d):** Unsafe handling of firearms, as shown by the deputy's improper discharge near fuel pumps, which posed a fire risk.
8. **General Order 323.5 - Required Reporting**
 - **Section 323.5.2(g):** Requires a report for any firearm discharge.
 - **Section 323.5.5(b):** Requires a report for damage to County property, which Sheriff Farris failed to make available to the public.
9. **General Order 1010.12 - Disciplinary Procedures**
 - Disciplinary actions are designed to uphold the Code of Conduct. Sheriff Farris's failure to impose appropriate disciplinary measures undermines public confidence and the ethical standards of the Sheriff's Office.

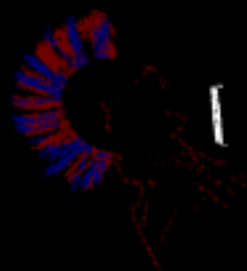
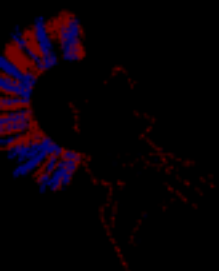
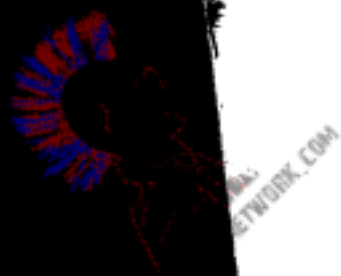
Recommendations

1. **Immediate Investigation and Audit**
 - Conduct an internal investigation into the incident, reviewing the Sheriff's handling of the matter and failure to impose disciplinary actions.
2. **Transparency and Public Reporting**
 - The Ethics Committee should require that all incidents involving public safety risks, such as firearm discharges, be reported publicly to maintain transparency and public trust.
3. **Re-Evaluation of Firearms Training**
 - Sheriff Farris should ensure deputies receive comprehensive refresher courses on firearm safety, focusing on handling firearms in public and around hazardous areas.
4. **Disciplinary Action and Accountability**
 - Require Sheriff Farris to implement appropriate disciplinary action against the deputy involved and to address his own oversight in failing to report the incident and uphold the department's Code of Conduct.

Failure to Properly Address Accidental Discharge of Firearm

Conclusion

Sheriff Farris's inaction in the wake of this incident demonstrates a lack of regard for public safety, Sheriff's Office policy, and ethical standards, thereby damaging public trust. The Ethics Committee is urged to take immediate action to investigate, enforce appropriate disciplinary procedures, and require transparency to restore confidence in the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.



Failure to Follow Standards of Practice Regarding Political Campaigns

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris
To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint highlights the inappropriate use of government resources by the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, under the direction of Sheriff Eddie Farris, who arranged a police escort and security detail for Marsha Blackburn, a Republican candidate for the United States Senate, during her campaign visit in Cookeville, Tennessee, in October 2018. The preferential treatment afforded to Blackburn, which was not extended to her Democratic opponent, Phil Bredesen, raises serious concerns about the fair and impartial use of office resources and may constitute violations of state and federal laws, notably the Little Hatch Act. Sheriff Farris's actions also appear to violate both the General Orders and the standards of conduct recommended by the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) program.

Summary of Issues

1. Use of Police Escort and Security Detail for Political Campaign

During Marsha Blackburn's campaign stop, the Putnam County Sheriff's Office deployed a police escort comprising multiple marked and unmarked vehicles, including motorcycles with activated blue lights and sirens. The security detail included several deputies, including members of the SWAT team. Notably, this event occurred within the jurisdiction of the Cookeville Police Department, which was not informed or involved in any of the security arrangements. This allocation of Sheriff's Office personnel and resources was exclusively directed towards Blackburn and not offered to her political opponent, raising significant concerns about bias and improper political activity.

2. Violation of Impartiality and Misuse of Office Resources

The use of county resources, including deputies, vehicles, and equipment, for a political campaign constitutes a violation of impartiality, suggesting that Sheriff Farris misused his position to support a political candidate.

3. Local Media Coverage and Public Awareness

A local newspaper, the *Herald-Citizen*, featured an article that mentioned the police escort provided to Blackburn, focusing on the Sheriff's Department's first female motorcycle officer. In the article, the officer referenced the escort, further documenting the Sheriff's Office's involvement in Blackburn's campaign activities. This public acknowledgment heightens the need for accountability and investigation into whether these actions violated the General Orders of the Sheriff's Office and state law.

Failure to Follow Standards of Practice Regarding Political Campaigns

Violations of General Orders

The actions of Sheriff Eddie Farris and the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in providing a police escort and security detail for Marsha Blackburn's campaign appear to violate the following General Orders:

1. **General Order 320.5.8 – Performance**
 - o g. Improper political activity, including attending official legislative or political sessions while on duty (T.C.A. § 38-8-310).
 - o h. Engaging in political activities during assigned working hours, which constitutes a misuse of government resources for political purposes.
2. **General Order 1030.4.1 – Unauthorized Endorsements and Advertisements**
 - o Members of the Sheriff's Office are prohibited from representing or identifying themselves in a way that could be reasonably perceived as representing the Office for the purposes of endorsing, supporting, opposing, or contradicting any political campaign or initiative (T.C.A. § 7-51-1501; T.C.A. § 38-8-310).

Additional Concerns

The actions taken by Sheriff Farris and the Putnam County Sheriff's Office during Marsha Blackburn's campaign stop raise significant concerns about the ethical use of government resources and personnel. The failure to provide equal treatment to both political candidates suggests partisan favoritism, undermining public trust in the impartiality of the Sheriff's Office. The involvement of uniformed deputies in political activities during working hours is especially problematic and violates the standards set forth by the office. This is further supported by a photo of Putnam County deputies in uniform appearing in a Blackburn campaign advertisement. It is unknown when or where the photo was taken.

Recommendations

1. **Initiate a Full Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should thoroughly investigate the involvement of Sheriff Farris and the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in providing a police escort and security detail for Marsha Blackburn during her political campaign. The investigation should determine whether state law or office policies were violated.
2. **Assess Compliance with the Little Hatch Act:** Evaluate whether the actions of Sheriff Farris and the deputies constitute a violation of the Little Hatch Act, which restricts political activities by government employees during working hours.
3. **Review Policies on Political Activities:** Ensure that all members of the Sheriff's Office are trained and reminded of the policies regarding political activity, including the prohibition of endorsing or supporting political candidates while on duty or in uniform.
4. **Implement Safeguards for Impartiality:** Establish stronger guidelines and oversight to ensure that the Sheriff's Office remains impartial during political campaigns and does not misuse resources or personnel for partisan purposes.

Failure to Follow Standards of Practice Regarding Political Campaigns

Conclusion

The involvement of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in Marsha Blackburn's political campaign raises serious concerns about the improper use of government resources and potential violations of state law and office policies. A thorough investigation is necessary to restore public trust and ensure that the Sheriff's Office operates fairly and impartially.



Thursday, July 4, 2019 | Putnam County, TN | <http://www.wunderground.com/tn/putnam>

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PCSO graduates first female motor deputy

Posted Thursday, November 8, 2018

BY PAGE STANAGE

The first female motor deputy from the Putnam County Sheriff's Office graduated from the motor school last month.

Deputy Margaret Motevalli has been in law enforcement for four years, and has served in Putnam County for the past year and a half. She said her experience with the motor school was difficult, but worth it.

"It was the hardest school I've ever been through on the military side and civilian side. For me, it was more mentally difficult than physical," said Motevalli. "It was just processing what they were telling me to do, and making the bike do it."

When Motevalli or Lt. Eric Hall, who also graduated from the motor school, dropped their 847-pound bikes during training, they picked them back up.

"Neither one of us got special treatment," Motevalli said. "If we dropped the bike, we picked it back up. Nobody was going to help us."

The bikes weigh 847 pounds.

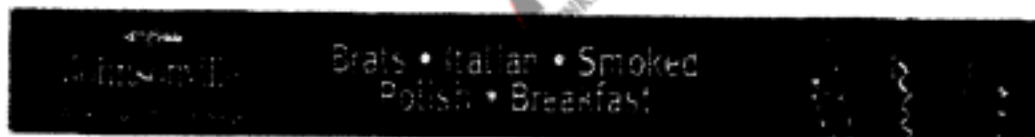
"The first week was very difficult," Motevalli said. "I learned how to take sharp turns, tight closed quarters movements, leaning the bike, and trusting yourself and the bike. That was the biggest thing for me."

The experience has been gratifying, especially since she is picking up motor assignments now.

"We (motor squad) escorted Marsha Blackburn to Big O's yesterday. It was exhilarating," Motevalli recalled.

So far one of her favorite things about being on the motor squad is interacting with children.

"We were at the Sam's Club Halloween event a week or two ago. And a bunch of girls came up to me and said 'I want to be you when I grow up.' That made me think of all the tough spots I'd been in, and that made it all worth it at that point," Motevalli said.



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<http://herald-citizen.com/stories/pcso-graduates-first-female-motor-deputy,31325>

7/4/19 11:38 AM
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Rode

Due October 2021

IFPO Conference – Las Vegas

Formal Complaint – Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint formally addresses Sheriff Eddie Farris's potential misuse of public funds and involvement in private business activities during his attendance at the Close Protection Conference in Las Vegas from December 12-15, 2019. This raises ethical concerns and questions about whether Sheriff Farris's actions violated the General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, as well as state laws governing the responsible use of taxpayer funds. Additionally, the complaint reflects concerns about adherence to Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) standards.

Summary of Incident

Sheriff Farris's participation in the Close Protection Conference, organized by the International Foundation of Protection Officers (IFPO) and centered on private security and executive protection training, prompts serious concerns about the true intentions behind his attendance. Notably, he made reservations related to the conference using an email linked to Tradewater South LLC, a private security firm owned by Bart Brown, a reserve deputy in the Sheriff's Office and a close associate of Farris. This connection raises significant questions about the reasons for his involvement in the conference and whether it was related to county business or primarily for personal benefit.

After the conference, Sheriff Farris submitted expenses amounting to \$912.20, which covered hotel accommodations, airfare, a rental car, and per diem, all charged to Putnam County taxpayers. The use of a private business email for registration, along with the nature of the conference, further complicates the legitimacy of these taxpayer-funded expenses, leading to serious concerns about whether these costs were justified or if they served private financial interests.

Key Facts

1. Private Business Involvement

- Sheriff Farris has a history of private security work for Tradewater South LLC, owned by Bart Brown, a reserve deputy in the Sheriff's Office. Farris's use of an email associated with Tradewater South LLC to register for the conference suggests that his attendance may have been for personal business purposes rather than official county duties.

2. Misuse of Public Funds

- Sheriff Farris submitted expenses totaling \$912.20 for hotel, airfare, rental car, and per diem, all charged to Putnam County taxpayers. This raises concerns that public funds may have been improperly used to attend a conference that did not directly relate to county business.

3. Violation of General Orders

IFPO Conference – Las Vegas

- **320.5.1:** Potential violation of laws and regulations related to the proper use of public funds.
- **320.5.2:** Possible misuse of his official position to gain influence for personal business interests tied to Tradewater South LLC.
- **320.5.6:** Unauthorized use of sheriff's office resources for personal gain related to private business interests.
- **320.5.7:** Neglect of duty in responsibly utilizing taxpayer funds for legitimate county purposes.
- **320.5.8:** Conduct unbecoming of an officer, which reflects poorly on the Sheriff's Office and erodes public trust.
- **320.5.9:** Actions bringing discredit to the Sheriff's Office, creating a negative perception among the public.

4. Failure to Uphold Ethical Responsibilities

- The County Commission Ethics Committee is tasked with ensuring public funds are used responsibly. Sheriff Farris's actions suggest possible misuse of county resources for personal business interests. Given his involvement with Tradewater South LLC, the nature of his attendance at the conference warrants serious review. If confirmed as violations, these issues should be reported to the Tennessee Comptroller's Office under the "Local Government Instances of Fraud Reporting Act" (T.C.A. § 8-4-501 et seq.).

Recommendations

1. Conduct a Thorough Investigation

- The Ethics Committee should initiate a detailed investigation into Sheriff Farris's attendance at the Close Protection Conference, specifically assessing whether his involvement was for personal business purposes and if his registration and expenses were aligned with county business.

2. Review Expense Submissions

- Conduct a review of the expenses submitted by Sheriff Farris, including those for hotel, airfare, rental car, and per diem, to assess their justification and relevance to official county purposes.

3. Assess Policy Violations

- Evaluate potential violations of General Orders and state laws governing the ethical use of public funds. If confirmed, appropriate disciplinary actions should follow.

4. Report Findings to the Tennessee Comptroller's Office

IFPO Conference – Las Vegas

- Should the investigation reveal misuse of public funds, the Committee is required to report these findings to the Tennessee Comptroller's Office as outlined in the "Local Government Instances of Fraud Reporting Act."

5. Implement Guidelines for Travel and Expenses

- Establish clear policies regarding the registration and participation of county officials in conferences, ensuring taxpayer funds are used responsibly and only for legitimate county purposes.

Conclusion

Sheriff Eddie Farris's attendance at the Close Protection Conference in Las Vegas, funded by Putnam County taxpayers, raises significant concerns about the misuse of public resources and potential conflicts of interest stemming from his private business activities. These actions suggest violations of both General Orders and ethical responsibilities. The Ethics Committee must thoroughly investigate and take appropriate steps to hold Sheriff Farris accountable if violations are found, including reporting findings to the Tennessee Comptroller's Office.

**RANDY
PORTER**
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

CHECK REQUEST FORM

PUTNAM COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE
300 East Spring St. Room #8
Phone 931-528-2161 Fax 931-528-1300

Amount: \$ 213.50

Remit check to: Eddie Farris

Department: Sheriff

Account #: _____

Purpose: International Protective Training

Date: 11-15-19

Department approval Pat At

Accounts Payable approval _____

*All proper invoices/receipts etc. should be attached
Department needs to keep a copy for their records*

Putnam County Executive • 300 E. Spring St., Room 8 • Cookeville, TN 38501
PHONE: (931) 528-2161 • FAX: (931) 528-1300 • rporter@putnamcountyttn.gov

Sent
11-21-19



U.S. General Services Administration

FY 2020 Per Diem Rates for ZIP 89109

Meals & Incidentals (M&IE) Breakdown

Primary Destination	County	M&IE Total	Continental Breakfast/Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Incidental Expenses	First & Last Day of Travel
Las Vegas	Clark	\$81	\$14	\$16	\$26	\$5	\$46.76

**RANDY
PORTER**
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

CHECK REQUEST FORM

PUTNAM COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE
300 East Spring St. Room #8
Phone 931-528-2161 Fax 931-528-1300

Amount: \$ 698.70
Refrt check to: Eddie Farris
Department: Sheriff
Account #: _____
Purpose: Reimbursement of
International Protective Security Training
Date: 11-13-19

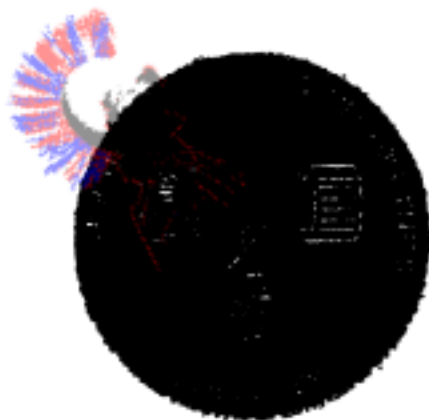
Department approval Pat Atkins

Accounts Payable approval _____

*All proper invoices/receipts etc. should be attached
Department needs to keep a copy for their records*

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11-21-19



INTERNATIONAL PROTECTIVE SECURITY BOARD

1 x Ticket

Order total: \$310.74

Thursday, December 12, 2019 at 6:00 PM - Saturday, December 14, 2019 at 4:30 PM (PST)

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Westgate Las Vegas Hotel and Casino

3000 Paradise Rd

Las Vegas, NV 89109

(View on map)

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The International Protective Security Board, Inc.

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Pat Athia

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web@tradewatersouth.com

Eddie Farris



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Part A4

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ly.southwest.com)

Date: Thursday, August 1, 2019, 09:13 AM CDT

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Hi William Edward,

We're looking forward to flying together! It can't come soon enough. Below you'll find your itinerary, important travel information, and trip receipt. See you onboard soon!

DECEMBER 12 - DECEMBER 15

BNA ✈ LAS

Nashville to Las Vegas

Confirmation # **LEYOUN**

Confirmation date: 08/01/2019

PASSENGER William Edward Farris

RAPID REWARDS

TICKET # 5282104412863

EXPIRATION ¹	July 31, 2020
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EST. POINTS EARNED 1,728

Rapid Rewards® points are only estimations.

Your itinerary

Flight 1: Thursday, 12/12/2019 Est. Travel Time: 4h 15m **Wanna Get Away®**

FLIGHT
#4381

ARRIVES
LAS 08:45AM
Las Vegas

Flight 2: Sunday, 12/15/2019 Est. Travel Time: 3h 25m Wanna Get Away®

Pat Atkins

4/15/2016

Yahoo Mail - William Edward Faria's 12/12 Las Vegas trip (LEYYOUN): Your reservation is confirmed.

FLIGHT
#4787

DEPARTS
LAS 06:35AM
Las Vegas



ARRIVES
BNA 12:00PM
Nashville

Payment information

Total cost

Air - LEYYOUN

Base Fare	\$ 287.78
U.S. Transportation Tax	\$ 21.58
U.S. 9/11 Security Fee	\$ 11.20
U.S. Flight Segment Tax	\$ 8.40
U.S. Passenger Facility Chg	\$ 9.00
EarlyBird	\$ 50.00
Total	\$ 387.96

Payment

Visa ending in:

Date: August 1, 2019

Payment Amount: \$337.96

Visa ending in:

Date: August 1, 2019

Payment Amount: \$25.00

Visa ending in:

Date: August 1, 2019

Payment Amount: \$25.00

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24 hours before your departure:

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30 minutes before your departure:

Arrive at the gate prepared to board.



10 minutes before your departure:

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Patricia

11/15/2019

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Pat A.



Bart Brown

Security Professional

Washington DC-Baltimore Area · **Contact Info**

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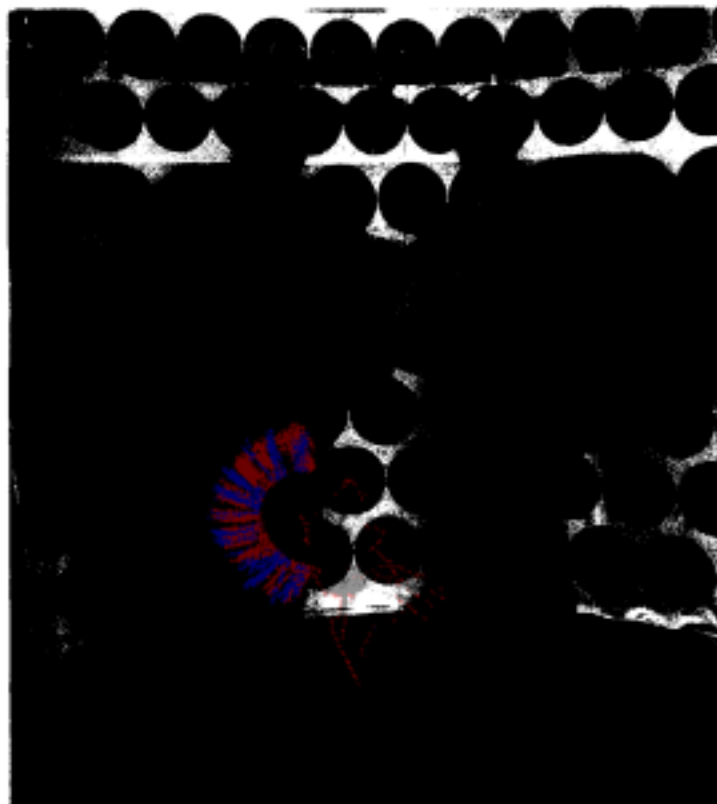
**Putnam County TN Sheriff's Office - Eddie Farris, Sheriff**

Jan 23, 2020 · 🌐

SHERIFF WELCOMES RETIRED SPECIAL AGENT
TO PUTNAM COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
RESERVES UNIT

Sheriff Eddie Farris welcomes retired Special Agent Bart Brown as one of the newest Reserve Deputies for the PCSO.

During his last last tour of duty, Brown was stationed in Washington D.C. where he served as the Special Agent in Charge over the US Attorney General's security detail.



👍 128

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**Eddie Farris**

Failure to Properly Investigate Anonymous Letter

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint concerns the failure of Sheriff Eddie Farris to appropriately report misconduct by former Deputy Kamron Johnston, the mishandling of a formal resignation process, and the improper handling of a subsequent investigation request concerning an anonymous defamatory letter. The lack of action and adherence to procedures outlined in the Sheriff's Office General Orders and the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation standards raises concerns about ethics, accountability, and leadership.

Summary of Issues

1. Resignation of Deputy Kamron Johnston Following Misconduct

On June 6, 2018, Deputy Kamron Johnston resigned from the Putnam County Sheriff's Department after soliciting sexual favors from a female suspect arrested for DUI. At the time of his resignation, Deputy Johnston was under criminal investigation by District Attorney Bryant Clyde Dunaway. Sheriff Eddie Farris failed to report this ongoing investigation to the Peace Officer's Standards Training (POST) Commission, as required by POST Rules 1110-02-04 concerning disciplinary actions. This failure to report a matter involving serious misconduct violated the rules and prevented proper accountability for Johnston's actions.

2. Anonymous Letter and Defamatory Content

Discrepancies regarding Johnston's resignation came to light through a letter sent to the Rader Law Firm, which was then communicated to the Sheriff's Office. Following this, I received an anonymous letter filled with defamatory remarks, including a false claim about my wife's mugshot in another state. The letter was signed with the initials "KJ," which seemed to imply authorship by Kamron Johnston, who was no longer employed by the Sheriff's Office. Since Johnston would not have been aware of my request for public records concerning his resignation letter, it is unlikely that he was the source of the anonymous communication. The apparent intent behind this letter seemed to be to intimidate and defame both me and my wife.

3. Mishandling of Request for Formal Investigation

When I requested a formal investigation from the Sheriff's Office regarding the anonymous letter, my request was forwarded to District Attorney Bryant Clyde Dunaway, even though Sheriff Farris was aware that my wife had previously sued Dunaway in federal court. Sheriff Farris should have recognized that Dunaway could potentially hold biases against both my wife and me. As expected, Dunaway dismissed the complaint as a civil issue but offered to direct the Sheriff's Office to conduct an internal investigation if he received a copy of the letter. However, it was not within Dunaway's authority to make such a request. The Sheriff's Office's General Orders clearly stipulate that an internal investigation should be initiated independently by the

Failure to Properly Investigate Anonymous Letter

Violations of General Orders

The actions of Deputy Kamron Johnston, and Sheriff Eddie Farris's failure to report and properly address these incidents, violate several General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office:

1. **General Order 320.5.1 - Violation of Laws, Rules, and Regulations**
 - Sheriff Farris failed to report Deputy Johnston's ongoing criminal investigation to the POST Commission as required by POST Rules 1110-02-04 concerning disciplinary actions. This failure to comply with established legal and procedural reporting requirements is a direct violation of this General Order.
2. **General Order 320.5.2 - Wrongful Exercise of Authority**
 - Sheriff Farris's decision to allow Deputy Johnston to resign without reporting the misconduct, combined with the inappropriate handling of the investigation request, suggests an exercise of authority aimed at concealing misconduct or protecting Johnston from further disciplinary action.
3. **General Order 320.5.3 - Possible Favoritism**
 - The handling of Johnston's resignation and the failure to report him to POST raises concerns about potential favoritism or preferential treatment in dealing with Johnston's misconduct.
4. **General Order 320.5.4 - Inappropriate Relationships**
 - The relationship between Sheriff Farris and District Attorney Dunaway may have impacted the impartiality of the investigation into the anonymous letter. Farris's decision to involve Dunaway in the investigation, despite knowledge of potential bias, violated General Orders and undermined the integrity of the investigative process.
5. **General Order 320.5.7 - Neglect of Duty**
 - Sheriff Farris neglected his duty by failing to act on known misconduct by Deputy Johnston and by not taking appropriate action to investigate the anonymous letter received by me. This failure to fulfill his duties reflects a significant lapse in leadership and accountability.
6. **General Order 320.5.8 - Conduct Bringing Discredit to the Sheriff's Office**
 - The failure to report Johnston's misconduct, the mishandling of the anonymous letter investigation, and the potential biases involved in the process reflect poorly on the Sheriff's Office and bring discredit to the department.
7. **General Order 320.5.9 - Failure to Report Activities Leading to Discipline**
 - Sheriff Farris failed to report Deputy Johnston's misconduct, which could have led to disciplinary action, as required by this General Order. Additionally, he did not ensure that the Sheriff's Office initiated an internal investigation as prescribed.
8. **General Order 1010.3 - Personnel Complaints**
 - Personnel complaints include any allegation of misconduct or improper job performance that, if true, would constitute a violation of office policy or federal, state, or local law, policy, or rule. Johnston's solicitation of sexual favors and the anonymous letter's defamatory content fall under the definition of misconduct. These complaints were not handled in accordance with the Sheriff's Office's procedures for investigating personnel complaints, leading to a failure of the department to uphold its own standards.
 - **Subsection d:** Anonymous and third-party complaints, like the one involving the defamatory letter, should be accepted and investigated to the extent that sufficient information is provided. However, Sheriff Farris failed to ensure that this occurred.

Failure to Properly Investigate Anonymous Letter

9. General Order 1010.13 - Inadequate Handling of Resignation Prior to Discipline

- Johnston's resignation was allowed to proceed without the Sheriff's Office ensuring the continuation of the pending criminal investigation. This mishandling of Johnston's resignation process violated the department's own policies and allowed Johnston to avoid full accountability for his actions.

Recommendations

- Initiate a Formal Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should conduct an investigation into the Sheriff's Office's failure to report Deputy Johnston's criminal investigation to the POST Commission, as well as its mishandling of the anonymous letter and the request for an internal investigation.
- Enforce General Orders:** The Sheriff's Office must ensure that all personnel, including the Sheriff, adhere to the General Orders regarding reporting misconduct, handling personnel complaints, and avoiding conflicts of interest.
- Improve Oversight of Investigations:** The Sheriff's Office should establish clear procedures for ensuring internal investigations are conducted impartially and without outside influence, particularly when conflicts of interest are present.

Conclusion

Sheriff Farris's failure to report Deputy Kamron Johnston's misconduct to the POST Commission, mishandling of a resignation during an ongoing investigation, and failure to properly investigate an anonymous defamatory letter reflect significant lapses in leadership and adherence to the General Orders of the Sheriff's Office. A thorough investigation is necessary to ensure accountability, prevent future misconduct, and restore public trust in the department.


Terry L. Hembree

September 20, 2021

Mr. Daniel H. Rader III
Law Office of Moore, Rader, Fitzpatrick and York P.C.
46 North Jefferson Avenue
Cookeville, TN 38501

Re: Tennessee Open Records Act (TORA) - Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

Dear Mr. Rader,

In response to your letter of August 24, 2021, regarding my record request of August 9, 2021, I am confused about your explanation of the unavailability of the records. Your explanation included assertions that I was requesting records that were not kept by the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, and they had no obligation to produce such records. I have no idea what records you are referring to in your letter.

I simply requested promotional records resulting in changes of assignment for personnel with an effective increase or decrease of salary. In a previous records request, I obtained similar information from the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in the form of a promotion list from January 2018 to December 2020. The only additional information I requested on August 9 was the increase or decrease of salary. I think it is reasonable to presume this information would be kept in the office of the human resource manager at the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. The same applies for my request of termination notices of personnel. Most human resource managers normally keep these types of files in their office for reference.

As a matter of record, I am making you aware in your official capacity as the self-designated legal representative of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office (proclaimed in your letter of December 18, 2020) and as an officer of the court, of inconsistencies discovered in records of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office received pursuant to my public records requests.

On September 25, 2020, pursuant to a previous request and letter requesting the resignation letter of former deputy Kameron Johnston and status of his resignation, you replied that you were advised that Johnston resigned in good standing with the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

I obtained an investigative file from the District Attorney's Office pursuant to a public records request and discovered that Johnston was under criminal investigation at the time of his resignation. In fact, there is an email from the District Attorney to his staff in that file referencing Johnston being on administrative leave at the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in May 2018. According to Johnston's resignation letter provided by the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, his resignation date was June 6, 2018.

Terry L. Hembree

[REDACTED]

Another email in the file sent to the District Attorney on June 1, 2018 from an attorney representing a related party in this matter inferred that the District Attorney had chosen not to prosecute Johnston. I could not find any reference in the file where the District Attorney confirmed that inference. It appeared from the investigative file that the District Attorney was on a path to prosecute Johnston. The District Attorney stated in an email to his investigator on June 18, 2018, "I believe I am in a position where I have to bring a charge against Kamron Johnston". The District Attorney referenced Johnston's termination in an email on June 27, 2018. He used the word "termination" when describing Johnston's departure from the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

It appeared from the investigative file that the District Attorney assumed Johnston was terminated from his employment at the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. I could not find any references in the file regarding negotiations between the District Attorney and Mr. Farris to allow Johnston to resign. Therefore, the question remains. Did Johnston resign or was he terminated? Were there discussions between the District Attorney and Mr. Farris about the criminal investigation of Johnston? Did the District Attorney agree to allow Johnston to resign in lieu of prosecution? If so, why did the District Attorney continue the investigation after Johnston resigned? According to the investigative file, there are indications that the investigation continued into August 2018. There is no reference as to when or why the investigation was closed; however, it does appear that the District Attorney chose not to prosecute Johnston. The District Attorney provided no documented explanation in the file of his decision not to prosecute.

Regardless of any agreement with the District Attorney, Mr. Farris was responsible for notifying the Tennessee Peace Officer and Standards of Training (POST) if Johnston resigned due to a pending criminal investigation. POST Rule 1110-02-04: Law enforcement agencies suspending for fifteen (15) days or longer, discharging certified law enforcement officers for disciplinary reasons or accepting the resignation in lieu of termination of certified law enforcement officers shall inform the Commission with ten (10) days.


In regards to my other records requests for promotional records from the Putnam County Sheriff's Office including signup sheets and emails pertaining to promotions, I found additional discrepancies. The promotion list I received pursuant to a records request for the period of January 2018 to December 2020 contained 37 names. There was only one email and no sign up sheets that correlated with this list. A follow up records request in April 2021 revealed two signup sheets that were "inadvertently overlooked" in a previous records requests, but they did not correlate with the promotion list. These two signup sheets contained discrepancies relating to the end date.

The signup sheets were for School Resource Officer (SRO) and Night Sergeant. There were two names on the signup sheet for SRO. Tony "Bo" Sherrell and Zack Maxwell with an end date of

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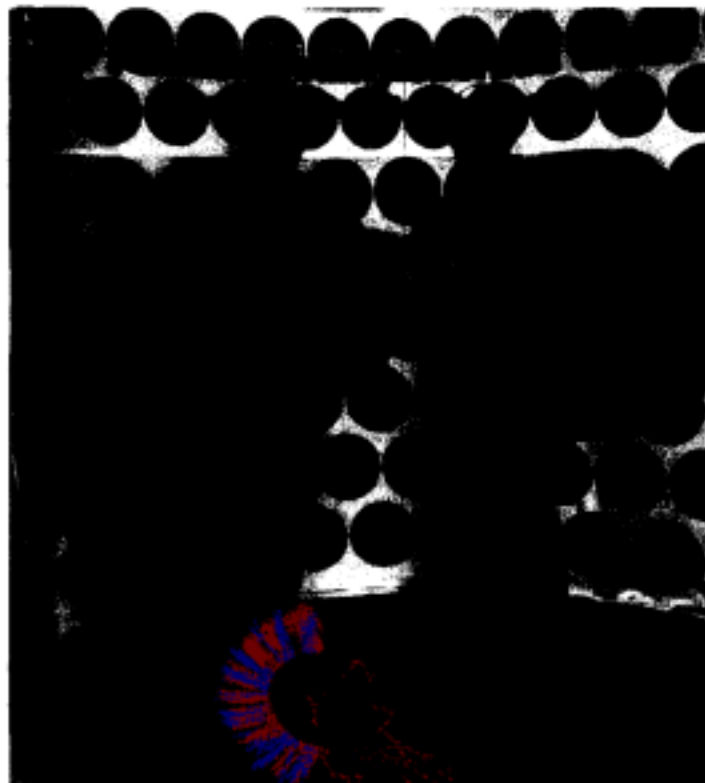
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**Putnam County TN Sheriff's Office - Eddie Farris, Sheriff**Jan 23, 2020 · 




SHERIFF WELCOMES RETIRED SPECIAL AGENT
TO PUTNAM COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
RESERVES UNIT

Sheriff Eddie Farris welcomes retired Special Agent Bart Brown as one of the newest Reserve Deputies for the PCSO.

During his last last tour of duty, Brown was stationed in Washington D.C. where he served as the Special Agent in Charge over the US Attorney General's security detail.

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PUTNAM COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CATCHES

Failure to Properly Investigate Anonymous Letter

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris
To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint concerns the failure of Sheriff Eddie Farris to appropriately report misconduct by former Deputy Kamron Johnston, the mishandling of a formal resignation process, and the improper handling of a subsequent investigation request concerning an anonymous defamatory letter. The lack of action and adherence to procedures outlined in the Sheriff's Office General Orders and the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation standards raises concerns about ethics, accountability, and leadership.

Summary of Issues

1. Resignation of Deputy Kamron Johnston Following Misconduct

On June 6, 2018, Deputy Kamron Johnston resigned from the Putnam County Sheriff's Department after soliciting sexual favors from a female suspect arrested for DUI. At the time of his resignation, Deputy Johnston was under criminal investigation by District Attorney Bryant Clyde Dunaway. Sheriff Eddie Farris failed to report this ongoing investigation to the Peace Officer's Standards Training (POST) Commission, as required by POST Rules 1110-02-04 concerning disciplinary actions. This failure to report a matter involving serious misconduct violated the rules and prevented proper accountability for Johnston's actions.

2. Anonymous Letter and Defamatory Content

Discrepancies regarding Johnston's resignation came to light through a letter sent to the Rader Law Firm, which was then communicated to the Sheriff's Office. Following this, I received an anonymous letter filled with defamatory remarks, including a false claim about my wife's mugshot in another state. The letter was signed with the initials "KJ," which seemed to imply authorship by Kamron Johnston, who was no longer employed by the Sheriff's Office. Since Johnston would not have been aware of my request for public records concerning his resignation letter, it is unlikely that he was the source of the anonymous communication. The apparent intent behind this letter seemed to be to intimidate and defame both me and my wife.

3. Mishandling of Request for Formal Investigation

When I requested a formal investigation from the Sheriff's Office regarding the anonymous letter, my request was forwarded to District Attorney Bryant Clyde Dunaway, even though Sheriff Farris was aware that my wife had previously sued Dunaway in federal court. Sheriff Farris should have recognized that Dunaway could potentially hold biases against both my wife and me. As expected, Dunaway dismissed the complaint as a civil issue but offered to direct the Sheriff's Office to conduct an internal investigation if he received a copy of the letter. However, it was not within Dunaway's authority to make such a request. The Sheriff's Office's General Orders clearly stipulate that an internal investigation should be initiated independently by the department, yet no action was taken in this regard.

Failure to Properly Investigate Anonymous Letter

Violations of General Orders

The actions of Deputy Kamron Johnston, and Sheriff Eddie Farris's failure to report and properly address these incidents, violate several General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office:

1. **General Order 320.5.1 - Violation of Laws, Rules, and Regulations**
 - Sheriff Farris failed to report Deputy Johnston's ongoing criminal investigation to the POST Commission as required by POST Rules 1110-02-04 concerning disciplinary actions. This failure to comply with established legal and procedural reporting requirements is a direct violation of this General Order.
2. **General Order 320.5.2 - Wrongful Exercise of Authority**
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3. **General Order 320.5.3 - Possible Favoritism**
 - The handling of Johnston's resignation and the failure to report him to POST raises concerns about potential favoritism or preferential treatment in dealing with Johnston's misconduct.
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 - The relationship between Sheriff Farris and District Attorney Dunaway may have impacted the impartiality of the investigation into the anonymous letter. Farris's decision to involve Dunaway in the investigation, despite knowledge of potential bias, violated General Orders and undermined the integrity of the investigative process.
5. **General Order 320.5.7 - Neglect of Duty**
 - Sheriff Farris neglected his duty by failing to act on known misconduct by Deputy Johnston and by not taking appropriate action to investigate the anonymous letter received by me. This failure to fulfill his duties reflects a significant lapse in leadership and accountability.
6. **General Order 320.5.8 - Conduct Bringing Discredit to the Sheriff's Office**
 - The failure to report Johnston's misconduct, the mishandling of the anonymous letter investigation, and the potential biases involved in the process reflect poorly on the Sheriff's Office and bring discredit to the department.
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 - Sheriff Farris failed to report Deputy Johnston's misconduct, which could have led to disciplinary action, as required by this General Order. Additionally, he did not ensure that the Sheriff's Office initiated an internal investigation as prescribed.
8. **General Order 1010.3 - Personnel Complaints**
 - Personnel complaints include any allegation of misconduct or improper job performance that, if true, would constitute a violation of office policy or federal, state, or local law, policy, or rule. Johnston's solicitation of sexual favors and the anonymous letter's defamatory content fall under the definition of misconduct. These complaints were not handled in accordance with the Sheriff's Office's procedures for investigating personnel complaints, leading to a failure of the department to uphold its own standards.
 - **Subsection d:** Anonymous and third-party complaints, like the one involving the defamatory letter, should be accepted and investigated to the extent that sufficient information is provided. However, Sheriff Farris failed to ensure that this occurred.

Failure to Properly Investigate Anonymous Letter

9. General Order 1010.13 - Inadequate Handling of Resignation Prior to Discipline

- Johnston's resignation was allowed to proceed without the Sheriff's Office ensuring the continuation of the pending criminal investigation. This mishandling of Johnston's resignation process violated the department's own policies and allowed Johnston to avoid full accountability for his actions.

Recommendations

1. **Initiate a Formal Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should conduct an investigation into the Sheriff's Office's failure to report Deputy Johnston's criminal investigation to the POST Commission, as well as its mishandling of the anonymous letter and the request for an internal investigation.
2. **Enforce General Orders:** The Sheriff's Office must ensure that all personnel, including the Sheriff, adhere to the General Orders regarding reporting misconduct, handling personnel complaints, and avoiding conflicts of interest.
3. **Improve Oversight of Investigations:** The Sheriff's Office should establish clear procedures for ensuring internal investigations are conducted impartially and without outside influence, particularly when conflicts of interest are present.

Conclusion

Sheriff Farris's failure to report Deputy Kamron Johnston's misconduct to the POST Commission, mishandling of a resignation during an ongoing investigation, and failure to properly investigate an anonymous defamatory letter reflect significant lapses in leadership and adherence to the General Orders of the Sheriff's Office. A thorough investigation is necessary to ensure accountability, prevent future misconduct, and restore public trust in the department.

Terry L. Hembree

September 20, 2021

Mr. Daniel H. Rader III
Law Office of Moore, Rader, Fitzpatrick and York P.C.
46 North Jefferson Avenue
Cookeville, TN 38501

Re: Tennessee Open Records Act (TORA) - Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

Dear Mr. Rader,

In response to your letter of August 24, 2021, regarding my record request of August 9, 2021, I am confused about your explanation of the unavailability of the records. Your explanation included assertions that I was requesting records that were not kept by the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, and they had no obligation to produce such records. I have no idea what records you are referring to in your letter.

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As a matter of record, I am making you aware in your official capacity as the self-designated legal representative of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office (proclaimed in your letter of December 18, 2020) and as an officer of the court, of inconsistencies discovered in records of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office received pursuant to my public records requests.

On September 25, 2020, pursuant to a previous request and letter requesting the resignation letter of former deputy Cameron Johnston and status of his resignation, you replied that you were advised that Johnston resigned in good standing with the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

I obtained an investigative file from the District Attorney's Office pursuant to a public records request and discovered that Johnston was under criminal investigation at the time of his resignation. In fact, there is an email from the District Attorney to his staff in that file referencing Johnston being on administrative leave at the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in May 2018. According to Johnston's resignation letter provided by the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, his resignation date was June 6, 2018.

Terry L. Hembree
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Another email in the file sent to the District Attorney on June 1, 2018 from an attorney representing a related party in this matter inferred that the District Attorney had chosen not to prosecute Johnston. I could not find any reference in the file where the District Attorney confirmed that inference. It appeared from the investigative file that the District Attorney was on a path to prosecute Johnston. The District Attorney stated in an email to his investigator on June 18, 2018, "I believe I am in a position where I have to bring a charge against Kamron Johnston". The District Attorney referenced Johnston's termination in an email on June 27, 2018. He used the word "termination" when describing Johnston's departure from the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

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Regardless of any agreement with the District Attorney, Mr. Farris was responsible for notifying the Tennessee Peace Officer and Standards of Training (POST) if Johnston resigned due to a pending criminal investigation. POST Rule 1110-02-04: Law enforcement agencies suspending for fifteen (15) days or longer, discharging certified law enforcement officers for disciplinary reasons or accepting the resignation in lieu of termination of certified law enforcement officers shall inform the Commission with ten (10) days.

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Terry L. Hembree
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October 25, 2021

Mr. Daniel H. Rader III
Law Offices of Moore, Rader, Fitzpatrick, and York, P.C.
46 North Jefferson Avenue
Cookeville, TN 38501

Re: Records Request - Putnam County Sheriff's Department

Dear Mr. Rader,

Pursuant to the Tennessee Open Records Act T.C.A. § 10-7-503, I am requesting copies of any and all reports and/or documents in custody of the Putnam County Sheriff's Department, whether they be in paper or computerized format and contain the names of Terry Hembree, Joan Hembree, and/or Joan Raines dated after May 2019 to the present. This request should include searches of our names in any law enforcement databases used by the Sheriff's Department. If the cost to produce these records exceeds \$25, my wife and I will request to view the records in person at the Putnam County Sheriff's Department.

In addition, I want to bring to your attention a letter I received in my post office box on October 2. The letter was postmarked on September 30 and began in salutation as "Hi Former Major". As you are probably aware, I worked at the Sheriff's Department from September 2014 until May 2019, and held the rank of major. The letter continued with a series of nonsensical questions including "Why are you so obsessed with me? Is it because you have a crush on me? Is it because you are still in need of a man's touch? Is it because you are still upset because I rejected your sexual advance? Leave me alone!" All of these statements are blatantly false, defamatory, and libelous regarding my sexual preference and alleged sexual advances. The fact that the letter was published in written format and circulated through the mail makes it even more egregious regarding libel.

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The letter created many questions for my wife and me. First, who is KJ? Why would KJ send a letter to my post office box? How did KJ get my post office box address? I generally only use my post office box address on correspondences. I have not sent correspondences to anyone with the initials KJ. Why would KJ offer to provide information about my wife's arrest in South Carolina but not provide a full return address or other means to make contact? As we were deliberating through these questions, we had other questions. Was KJ's letter was in response to my letter of September 20, in which I mentioned Kameron Johnston's resignation from the Putnam County Sheriff's Department? Why was KJ's letter postmarked 10 days after my letter of

Mr. Daniel H. Rader III
October 25, 2021
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In my opinion, the intent of KJ's letter was to communicate anonymously with my wife and me without a legitimate purpose with the malicious intent to frighten, intimidate or cause emotional distress; which according to the Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 39, Chapter 17, Section 308, (a) (4) constitutes a criminal offense of harassment.

I have spoken with an attorney regarding the letter. He recommended that the Sheriff's Department conduct an investigation into the matter since it is a criminal offense. The Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 38, Chapter 3, Section 102 (b) "It shall be the duty of the sheriffs, in their respective counties, by themselves or deputies, to patrol the roads of the county, to ferret out crimes, to secure evidence of crimes, and to apprehend and arrest criminals." I have preserved the letter and envelope for evidentiary purposes.

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I look forward to your response.


Sincerely,


Terry L. Hembree

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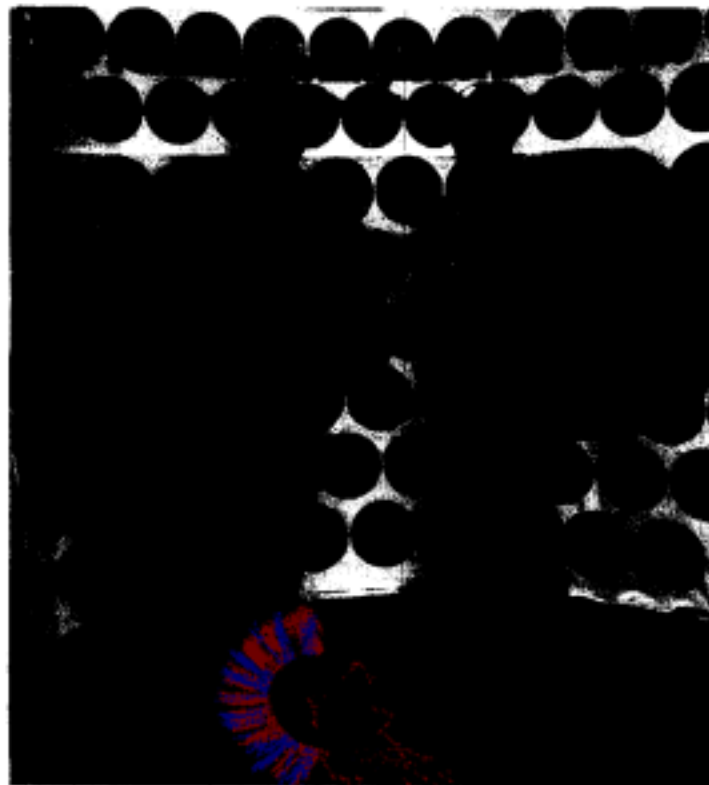
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**Putnam County TN Sheriff's Office - Eddie Farris, Sheriff**Jan 23, 2020 · 

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TO PUTNAM COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
RESERVES UNIT

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**Eddie Farris**Jan 22, 2020 · **Putnam County TN Sheriff's Office - Eddie Farris, Sheriff**Jan 22, 2020 · 

PUTNAM COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CATCHES

Failure to Properly Investigate Anonymous Letter

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To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

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Failure to Properly Investigate Anonymous Letter

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Terry L. Hembree
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September 20, 2021

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Law Office of Moore, Rader, Fitzpatrick and York P.C.
46 North Jefferson Avenue
Cookeville, TN 38501

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Terry L. Hembree



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Terry L. Hembree

Sheriff's Office Employee Off-Duty Unauthorized Conduct

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint addresses Sheriff Eddie Farris's failure to appropriately discipline Major Michael Ronczkowski for his violation of General Orders and unprofessional behavior. In May 2022, Major Ronczkowski, a civilian member of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, was involved in an off-duty confrontation at Center Hill Lake in Dekalb County, Tennessee, with YouTube personality "WhistlinDiesel" over a minor boating safety regulation. The incident, captured on video and posted to WhistlinDiesel's YouTube account, gained significant attention due to Ronczkowski's aggressive and profane conduct. Despite clear violations of General Orders and failure to uphold the standards of the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation program, Sheriff Farris neglected to take disciplinary action against Ronczkowski.

Summary of Issues

1. Involvement in Off-Duty Incident at Center Hill Lake

- In May 2022, Major Michael Ronczkowski, an uncertified law enforcement officer as confirmed by the Tennessee Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission, confronted WhistlinDiesel at Center Hill Lake, accusing him of unsafe watercraft operation. Ronczkowski, while off duty, identified himself as a member of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. His unprofessional behavior, including the use of profane language and an aggressive approach, escalated what could have been a minor issue into a significant confrontation, breaching the department's standards for off-duty conduct.

2. Improper Influence and Potential Misuse of Authority

- Following this confrontation, WhistlinDiesel and his companion were cited for misdemeanors by officers from the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA), despite these officers not witnessing the incident firsthand, as required by Tennessee law for issuing misdemeanor citations. It is suspected that Ronczkowski influenced the TWRA officers to issue these citations. As a civilian member of the Sheriff's Office, Ronczkowski's off-duty intervention raises concerns about misuse of authority and the perception of undue influence in the issuance of these citations.

3. Public Reaction and Lack of Disciplinary Action

- The video of this incident has been widely viewed, with many criticizing Ronczkowski's conduct. A subsequent public records request revealed no disciplinary action against Ronczkowski despite his unprofessional behavior and the resulting public backlash. The Sheriff's Office's failure to address this reflects poorly on its leadership and suggests a disregard for professional standards and transparency under Sheriff Farris's watch.

Violations of General Orders

The actions of Major Michael Ronczkowski, as well as the lack of disciplinary response from Sheriff Eddie Farris, constitute violations of the following General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office:

Sheriff's Office Employee Off-Duty Unauthorized Conduct

1. **General Order 320.5.1(c) - Laws, Rules, and Orders**
 - Ronczkowski's actions may have contributed to the improper issuance of misdemeanor citations and off-duty conduct standards for civilian members.
2. **General Order 320.5.2(a) and (g) - Ethics**
 - Ronczkowski misused his status within the Sheriff's Office to influence a matter outside his official duties, violating ethical standards and creating an appearance of power abuse.
3. **General Order 320.5.8(i) - Performance**
 - Ronczkowski's conduct damaged the reputation of the Sheriff's Office; his behavior was publicly broadcasted and resulted in widespread negative commentary, tarnishing the department's image.
4. **General Order 320.5.9(e), (f), (g), and (l) - Conduct**
 - Ronczkowski's discourteous, disrespectful, and profane language, as well as his aggressive demeanor, violated multiple provisions on conduct, making his behavior unbecoming of a Sheriff's Office representative and detrimental to the department's reputation.
5. **General Order 342.2 - Off-Duty Conduct Policy**
 - Sheriff's Office policy discourages deputies from initiating law enforcement action while off duty. Though a civilian, Ronczkowski engaged in law enforcement-like actions, identifying himself as part of the department and attempting to influence the situation.
6. **General Order 342.4.1 - Civilian Responsibilities**
 - Civilian members are instructed not to engage in law enforcement activities off duty and should instead notify appropriate authorities if needed. Ronczkowski disregarded this policy by confronting WhistlinDiesel and potentially influencing TWRA officers' decisions.

Recommendations

1. **Conduct a Formal Investigation**
 - The Ethics Committee should thoroughly investigate the incident at Center Hill Lake, examining Major Ronczkowski's role, any influence he may have exerted over TWRA officers, and Sheriff Farris's decision not to discipline Ronczkowski.
2. **Implement Clearer Standards and Accountability Measures**
 - The Sheriff's Office should review and enforce standards regarding off-duty conduct, ensuring that civilian members understand their responsibilities and limitations. Any future unprofessional behavior should result in appropriate disciplinary actions.
3. **Reaffirm the Importance of Professional Conduct**
 - Sheriff Farris should emphasize the importance of professional conduct, on and off duty, to restore public trust and uphold the department's integrity.

Conclusion

Major Michael Ronczkowski's actions during the off-duty incident at Center Hill Lake, and Sheriff Farris's lack of disciplinary response, show a failure to uphold the standards of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. The Ethics Committee should investigate these actions to reinforce accountability and ensure public trust in the department.

Tennessee Public Records Act - Discrepancies of Official Records

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint pertains to the handling of a public records request by Sheriff Eddie Farris, which I submitted on November 21, 2020, in accordance with the Tennessee Public Records Act. My request included promotion lists from 2018 to 2020, sign-up sheets for job openings, and related emails. Unfortunately, the response from the Sheriff's Office fell short of the legal requirements established by the Act, raising significant concerns regarding the office's transparency, legal compliance, and overall integrity. Additionally, the response did not align with the General Orders of the Sheriff's Office or meet the criteria set forth by the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) program.

Summary of Issues

1. Excessive Fees

- The Sheriff's Office charged \$173.41 for 31 documents, broken down into \$7.75 for copies at a rate of \$0.25 per page and \$165.66 for labor costs. The Tennessee Public Records Act, however, limits copying fees to \$0.15 per page. Additionally, the reported 6.5 hours of labor to compile these documents raises questions about the accuracy and appropriateness of the labor charges.

2. Inadequate Documentation

- The Sheriff's Office provided a promotion list with the names of 37 employees; however, several key documents were missing. Only one email announcing job openings from 2018 to 2020 was included, raising concerns that important records may have been withheld or inadequately maintained. Additionally, two sign-up sheets that were eventually shared after a follow-up request revealed significant discrepancies. For instance, the sign-up sheet for a night sergeant position listed an employee who was already a sergeant and another who was no longer employed at the time of the announcement. A sign-up sheet for SRO officer positions also included individuals who were already in those roles. These inconsistencies point to inadequate recordkeeping and may suggest manipulation in the promotion sign-up process. Moreover, there are significant concerns regarding the accuracy of the submitted sign-up sheets, as one listed a former employee who was not employed during the timeframe of the purported promotion.

Violations of General Orders

The Sheriff's Office's mishandling of the public records request and the irregularities in the promotion process violate several General Orders:

1. General Order 320.5.2 – Ethics

- b. Wrongful or unlawful exercise of authority for malicious purpose, personal gain, willful deceit, or any other improper purpose (T.C.A. § 39-16-402).

2. General Order 320.5.7 – Efficiency

- c. Concealing, attempting to conceal, removing, or destroying defective or incompetent work.

Tennessee Public Records Act - Discrepancies of Official Records

3. General Order 320.5.8 – Performance

- o a. Failing to disclose or misrepresenting material facts, making false or misleading statements on official documents or during any investigation (T.C.A. § 39-16-502).
- o b. Falsification of work-related records, misleading entries with intent to deceive, or unauthorized removal or destruction of office or public records (T.C.A. § 39-16-504).

4. General Order 320.5.9 – Conduct

- o g. Engaging in criminal, dishonest, or disgraceful conduct that adversely affects the member's relationship with the office.
- o l. Any on- or off-duty conduct unbecoming of a member of the office that reflects poorly on the office or its members.

Additional Concerns

This complaint highlights deeper issues of transparency, efficiency, and accountability within the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. The excessive fees and inadequate response to the public records request undermine public trust and suggest a systemic failure to maintain accurate and accessible records, particularly related to the promotion process.

Recommendations

1. Conduct a Thorough Investigation

- o The Ethics Committee should investigate the handling of the public records request to determine if systemic issues are affecting compliance with the Tennessee Public Records Act.

2. Assess Accountability

- o Investigate whether the excessive fees, inadequate documentation, and omissions were intentional and determine who is responsible.

3. Implement Training and Policies

- o Develop clear policies and provide training on handling public records requests to ensure that all employees understand and comply with legal requirements.

4. Enhance Transparency

- o Improve communication with the public about the handling of records requests and ensure that proper documentation is maintained and accessible regarding internal promotions and other personnel matters.

Conclusion

The mishandling of the public records request and the discrepancies surrounding the promotion process demonstrate significant issues with transparency and accountability within the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. A thorough investigation by the Ethics Committee is necessary to ensure compliance with the Tennessee Public Records Act and restore public trust in the office's operations.

Sheriff's Office Use of Social Media Accounts

Violations of General Orders

Sheriff Farris's actions regarding the use of social media accounts and the censorship of public comments appear to violate the following General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office:

1. General Order 320.5.3 – Discrimination and Oppression:

- Discriminating against, oppressing, or intentionally denying or impeding another in the exercise or enjoyment of any right, privilege, power, or immunity, knowing the conduct is unlawful (T.C.A. § 39-16-403).

2. General Order 320.5.6 – Unauthorized Access, Disclosure, or Use:

- Unauthorized and inappropriate intentional release of confidential or protected information, materials, data, forms, or reports obtained as a result of the member's position with this office (T.C.A. § 39-16-404).

3. General Order 320.5.9 – Conduct:

- Discourteous, disrespectful, or discriminatory treatment of any member of the public or any member of this office or the County.
- Any on- or off-duty conduct that a member knows or reasonably should know is unbecoming a member of this office, contrary to good order, efficiency, or morale, or tends to reflect unfavorably upon this office or its members.

4. General Order 322.2 – Policy:

- The Sheriff's Office will use social media to inform the public about office services, issues, investigations, recruitment, and other relevant events. Office members shall ensure that the use of social media protects the constitutional rights of all.

5. General Order 322.3 – Authorized Users:

- Only authorized members may utilize social media on behalf of the Office. Authorized members shall use only office-approved equipment during the normal course of duties unless otherwise authorized.

6. General Order 322.4 – Authorized Content:

- Only content that supports the office mission and conforms to office policies regarding information release may be posted, including press releases, announcements, crime prevention tips, and investigative requests.

Additional Concerns

The issue at hand involves whether Sheriff Farris's statements in his affidavit concerning the federal lawsuit were false or misleading, particularly his claim that the social media accounts in question were his personal accounts. The inconsistency between this assertion and the actual use of those accounts for official business raises significant ethical and legal concerns regarding his conduct.

Sheriff's Office Use of Social Media Accounts

Recommendations

1. **Conduct a Thorough Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should investigate the censorship of public comments on the social media accounts, Sheriff Farris's use of these accounts for official business, and the accuracy of his statements under oath.
2. **Assess Accountability:** Determine whether Sheriff Farris's actions violate department policies, General Orders, and state or federal laws. Evaluate the implications of his censorship of public comments and his claim that the accounts were personal.
3. **Implement Clear Social Media Policies:** Ensure that clear guidelines are established and enforced regarding the use of social media accounts by the Sheriff's Office, with transparency about official communications.
4. **Increase Public Transparency:** Improve transparency in communication with the public regarding how social media accounts are managed and how public comments are addressed.

Conclusion

Sheriff Eddie Farris's actions in censoring public comments on social media and his subsequent statements in a federal lawsuit raise significant concerns regarding his adherence to General Orders, transparency, and public accountability. A thorough investigation is needed to address these concerns and ensure the public trust in the Putnam County Sheriff's Office is upheld.

Inmate Drug Overdoses at Putnam County Jail

Formal Complaint Against Sheriff Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint addresses Sheriff Eddie Farris's inadequate response to multiple incidents of drug overdoses among inmates at the Putnam County Jail in 2023 and 2024. The failure to address these ongoing issues has raised serious concerns regarding inmate safety and the fiscal responsibility owed to the taxpayers of Putnam County.

Summary of Incidents

Over the past year, the Putnam County Jail has experienced multiple drug overdoses among inmates, indicating a troubling pattern of neglect regarding inmate safety:

- **July 2023:** Eight female inmates overdosed, resulting in costly medical treatment and hospitalization.
- **August 2023:** Three additional inmates suffered overdoses requiring further medical care.
- **April 2024:** Another five inmates experienced overdoses, necessitating additional medical treatment.

These incidents suggest a serious neglect of duty by Sheriff Farris to maintain a safe environment within the jail. The lack of effective measures to prevent drug introduction not only endangered inmate health but also imposed substantial financial costs on taxpayers.

In response to these repeated overdoses, a concerned citizen emailed Putnam County Mayor Randy Porter requesting an independent investigation into the matter. However, Mayor Porter forwarded the email to Sheriff Farris, and there is no indication that any investigation was conducted to determine how drugs were entering the facility. This lack of transparency and accountability is deeply concerning.

Violations of General Orders

Sheriff Farris's handling of these serious issues constitutes violations of the following General Orders:

1. General Order 902 - Custodial Searches:

- **Purpose and Scope:** The failure to conduct proper custodial searches has allowed contraband and drugs to enter the jail, posing significant risks to both inmates and staff.
- **Safety and Security:** Inadequate searches and inspections have compromised the safety of the facility and its occupants.
- **Medical Care:** The repeated medical emergencies resulting from drug overdoses indicate a failure to provide adequate oversight and care for inmates' well-being.

Use of Sheriff's Office Vehicle by County Official in Christmas Parade

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

The purpose of this complaint is to formally raise concerns about the misuse of county resources by Sheriff Eddie Farris in allowing the use of a sheriff's office vehicle to chauffeur County Clerk Wayne Nabors. It specifically highlights the inappropriate use of an unmarked sheriff's SUV during the Cookeville Putnam County Christmas Parade on December 11, 2023, and the potential ethical violations stemming from this incident. The concern is further amplified by the fact that a few weeks after riding in the sheriff's department vehicle, Nabors announced his candidacy for Putnam County Mayor in 2026 on his Facebook page.

Summary

On December 11, 2023, Sheriff Eddie Farris allowed County Clerk Wayne Nabors to ride as a passenger in an unmarked sheriff's SUV—equipped with flashing blue lights—during the Cookeville Putnam County Christmas Parade. The vehicle prominently displayed a sign with Nabors' name and official title, which raises considerable concerns about the use of county property for personal promotion. Just a few weeks later, Nabors announced his candidacy for Putnam County Mayor in the 2026 election on his Facebook page. The timing and nature of his participation in the parade may suggest that Sheriff Farris aided in using the vehicle to enhance Nabors' public image, prompting ethical questions regarding the misuse of county resources. In contrast, the current Putnam County Mayor, Randy Porter, participated in the parade on foot, avoiding any use of county resources for self-promotion.

Points of Interests

- Misuse of County Resources:** On December 11, 2023, Sheriff Farris allowed County Clerk Wayne Nabors to ride in an unmarked sheriff's SUV equipped with flashing blue lights, with magnetic signs bearing Nabors' name and official title of County Clerk displayed on the vehicle during the Cookeville Putnam County Christmas Parade.
- Promotional Use:** A few weeks following the parade, Nabors took to social media to announce his candidacy for Putnam County Mayor in the 2026 election. This raised concerns about whether an official government vehicle was used for personal promotion, which would seem to violate the Sheriff's Office policies on the promotional use of government resources.
- Ethical Concerns:** The actions of Sheriff Farris suggest a potential violation of these ethical standards, as Nabors' use of the sheriff's office vehicle gave him a public platform to highlight his position as a public servant.
- Inappropriate Use of Vehicle:** The General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office strictly govern the use of county vehicles and the authorization of passengers, and the parade circumstances do not seem to meet the criteria for legitimate use of such resources.

Use of Sheriff's Office Vehicle by County Official in Christmas Parade

Violations of General Orders

1. General Order 320.5.2 ETHICS

- o f. Misappropriation or misuse of public funds, property, personnel, or services.

2. General Order 703.2 POLICY

- o The Putnam County Sheriff's Office provides vehicles for office-related business and may assign patrol and unmarked vehicles based on operational efficiency.

3. General Order 703.3.8 AUTHORIZED PASSENGERS

- o Members operating office vehicles shall not permit persons other than County personnel or individuals required to be conveyed in the performance of duty, except as stated in the Ride-Along Policy.

4. General Order 1030.4.1 UNAUTHORIZED ENDORSEMENTS AND ADVERTISEMENTS



- o Members may not represent the Sheriff's Office or identify themselves in any way that could reasonably be perceived as representing the Office in order to endorse or support any public official or office holder.

Recommendations

1. **Conduct a Thorough Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should initiate a detailed investigation into the use of the sheriff's vehicle during the parade and assess whether these actions constitute improper misuse of county resources.
2. **Review of Policy Compliance:** Examine the sheriff's office policies concerning the use of vehicles and the conduct of personnel, ensuring that similar violations do not occur in the future.
3. **Address Ethical Misconduct:** If it is determined that Sheriff Farris engaged in unethical behavior by allowing county resources to be used inappropriately, then appropriate corrective actions should be taken. Information should also be reported to the Comptroller's Office.
4. **Implement Clear Guidelines:** Develop and enforce clear guidelines that prevent the misuse of public resources for the public promotion of county officials.

Conclusion

Sheriff Farris's decision to allow County Clerk Wayne Nabors to use an unmarked sheriff's vehicle raises serious ethical questions about the appropriateness of utilizing government resources. This concern is amplified by Nabors' recent declaration of his candidacy for Putnam County Mayor in 2026, which followed shortly after the Christmas parade. It is crucial that these actions undergo a thorough investigation to assess whether there was any improper favoritism or violations of established General Orders. The Ethics Committee must perform a detailed review to ensure accountability and to mitigate the risk of future misconduct.

 **Wayne Nabors for Putnam County Mayor 2026**
January 1 • 

I'm thrilled to announce that I'm stepping up for a new chapter – I'm officially running for Putnam County Mayor in 2026! I'm dedicated to serving our community and making a positive impact. Join me in this adventure for progress, unity, and a brighter future for Putnam County!

HAPPY NEW YEAR

from

**WAYNE
NABORS**

**2026
CANDIDATE
FOR
COUNTY MAYOR**



Unlawful and Unconstitutional Ban List

Formal Complaint – Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

The purpose of this complaint is to formally address significant concerns regarding Sheriff Eddie Farris's creation and enforcement of an unlawful and unconstitutional "Ban List" within the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. It underscores the potential impact of these actions on public trust and their deviation from recognized ethical standards, as well as the failure to comply with the guidelines set forth by the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA).

Summary

In November 2021, it was revealed that the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, led by Sheriff Farris, established a "Ban List". This list was used to restrict access to the public lobby, requiring individuals to announce themselves and be checked against the list before being allowed entry. Individuals listed on the "Ban List" had been critical of Sheriff Farris and the sheriff's office on social media. Sheriff Farris through the Rader Law Firm denied the existence of a "Ban List" in a public statement, despite documentation indicating otherwise. They referred to the "Ban List" as an "Admonition". The creation of the "Ban List" raise significant ethical concerns regarding transparency, accountability, and the suppression of public discourse.

Key Facts

1. **Unconstitutional "Ban List":** The list was created to include the names of individuals who had publicly criticized Sheriff Farris or the Sheriff's Office, which has raised allegations of unconstitutional conduct.
2. **Public Lobby Access Restrictions:** The "Ban List" was prominently displayed in the Dispatch Office and utilized to control public access. Individuals had to use an intercom system to announce themselves and were checked against the list.
3. **Public Criticism:** Letters published in the *Herald-Citizen* newspaper raised concerns about the existence of the "Ban List." In response, Sheriff Farris, through the Rader Law Firm, denied the list was a "Ban List", despite documentation obtained through a public records request identifying it as a "NO ENTRY BAN LIST." Sheriff Farris through the Rader Law Firm identified the list as an "Admonition" and required those whose names appeared on the list to make arrangements before coming to the Sheriff's Office. However, there is no evidence to suggest the individuals on the list were advised of the "Admonition".
4. **Suppression of Public Discourse:** Sheriff Farris criticized the *Herald-Citizen* for publishing dissenting letters, attempting to stifle legitimate public discourse.
5. **Insufficient Explanation:** In response to a public records request on behalf of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, the Rader Law Firm described the "Ban List" as a "cautionary admonition", which would suggest by a reasonable standard, that individuals listed on the "Ban List" had been informed. However, no evidence was provided to confirm that any of the individuals on the "Ban

Unlawful and Unconstitutional Ban List

List" had actually received proper notification, and the inclusion of a fictitious name on the list raises additional concerns.

6. **No Legal Justification:** There were no court orders prohibiting any of the named individuals from entering the Sheriff's Office, indicating a lack of legal foundation for enforcement of the "Ban List".
7. **Involvement of Chief Deputy:** Chief Deputy Bob Crabtree was involved in approving the "Ban List". However, it appears unlikely this list would have been created without Sheriff Farris's approval.

Violations of General Orders

1. **General Order 320.5.1:** Violations of federal, state, local, or administrative laws and regulations.
2. **General Order 320.5.2:** Wrongful or unlawful exercise of authority for improper purposes (T.C.A. § 39-16-402).
3. **General Order 320.5.3:** Discrimination against individuals and unlawful denial of their rights (T.C.A. § 39-16-403).
4. **General Order 320.5.7:** Neglect of duty regarding public access and transparency.
5. **General Order 320.5.8:** Actions that bring discredit to the Sheriff's Office.
6. **General Order 320.5.9:** Excessive conduct and discourteous treatment of the public, as well as conduct unbecoming of an officer.

Recommendations

1. **Conduct a Thorough Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should initiate a detailed investigation into the creation and enforcement of the "Ban List" to assess the legality and appropriateness of these actions.
2. **Review Existing Policies:** Examine current policies regarding public access and transparency to prevent similar violations in the future and recommend necessary updates.
3. **Promote Transparency:** Develop guidelines to ensure that all members of the public are treated fairly and equitably, regardless of their opinions about the Sheriff's Office.
4. **Report Findings:** If violations are confirmed, the Ethics Committee should report these findings to the appropriate authorities, ensuring accountability.
5. **Implement Ethics Training:** Provide mandatory training on ethical conduct and public accountability for Sheriff Farris and his staff to foster a culture of respect for public discourse.

Unlawful and Unconstitutional Ban List

Conclusion

The actions of Sheriff Eddie Farris in creating and enforcing the "Ban List" represent serious violations of ethical standards and public trust. These actions not only undermine the integrity of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office but also reflect a misuse of authority to suppress criticism. It is imperative that the Ethics Committee thoroughly investigate these matters and take appropriate actions to restore confidence in the office.



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November 23, 2021

Mr. Terry Hembree
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Re: Open Records Request
Putnam County Sheriff's Office

Dear Mr. Hembree:

Enclosed is your receipt for the copy which you received.

The Sheriff of Putnam County establishes the rules and regulations for the operation of the Putnam County Jail. He has wide discretion with respect to security measures, including disallowing certain individuals or groups in the jail facility.

Court Orders are maintained by the Circuit Court Clerk's Office; the Criminal Court Clerk's Office; the General Sessions Court Clerk's Office; and the Clerk and Master for the Chancery Court of Putnam County, Tennessee. You may check with those offices with respect to any court orders you desire.

Lastly, I would like to point out that even though the document which you requested stated "No entry ban list", the individuals were not actually banned, but it was only a cautionary admonition that if these individuals wanted to come to the jail, they had to make arrangements in advanced for the circumstances under which they would be permitted into the facility.

I also want to point out to you that it seems rather foolish for you to send me a \$7.38 registered letter to pay 15 cents when you could have dropped it by my office while you were in town, or you could have simply mailed it. The Open Records Act permits charging 15 cents per page for copies. We do not want to show preferential treatment, so we charge everyone this rate, including you.



LOBBY NO ENTRY BAN LIST
CID HAS ADVISED NO LOBBY ENTRY
UPDATED PER 302

ALICIA BOHANNON
JASON BOHANNON
ERIC HAMMOCK
SHANNON JOHNSON
VICKI JONES
SYDNEY YOUNG
JERRY MONTGOMERY
HILLARY POINDEXTER
STEVEN EDWARDS

CHRIS GOMEZ (per 302)
AKA Christian Adrian Gomez
Sanchez



Deputy Mia Godinez Inappropriate Behavior and DUI Arrest

Formal Complaint – Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris
To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint concerns the lack of disciplinary action taken by Sheriff Eddie Farris in response to allegations of Deputy Mia Godinez's misconduct, including her inappropriate behavior in public while intoxicated, and a subsequent DUI arrest. Sheriff Farris's inaction contradicts both the General Orders and the conduct standards outlined by the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) program. His failure to implement necessary corrective measures demonstrates a deficiency in leadership and raises important questions regarding his accountability to the public.

Summary of Issues

1. Incident at Convenience Store After Party

Multiple sources have reported that Deputy Mia Godinez attended a gathering at the residence of another Putnam County deputy, during which alcoholic beverages were available. It is alleged that Deputy Godinez became intoxicated and subsequently accompanied officers from neighboring jurisdictions to a nearby convenience store. While at the convenience store, she reportedly engaged in inappropriate behavior, including kissing and embracing the clerk, as well as exposing her breasts—actions witnessed by the other officers present. As a result of the incident, one of these officers reportedly faced disciplinary action from his police chief. Additionally, an on-duty officer from the jurisdiction where the convenience store was located responded to the incident. This officer reportedly directed an off-duty colleague from the same department to guarantee that Godinez was safely escorted back home. Despite the presence of multiple witnesses to the events, there are no records showing that Sheriff Farris imposed any disciplinary measures against Deputy Godinez.

2. Subsequent DUI Arrest

A few months after the convenience store incident, Deputy Godinez was involved in a single-car accident while off duty and sustained injuries. She was subsequently arrested for driving under the influence (DUI). Instead of terminating her employment following this serious offense, Sheriff Farris allowed Godinez to resign voluntarily and publicly praised her service to the Sheriff's Office in a press release, despite her prior misconduct.

3. Knowledge of Godinez's Past Disciplinary Issues

Records of Deputy Godinez's previous disciplinary actions from other employers were acquired through public records requests. Sheriff Farris had a responsibility to be aware of her disciplinary background with other law enforcement agencies prior to hiring her. Had Sheriff Farris taken suitable disciplinary measures against Deputy Godinez following the incident at the convenience store, it might have deterred her from engaging in further misconduct, such as the subsequent DUI incident.

4. Violations of General Orders

The actions of Deputy Godinez, and Sheriff Farris's failure to appropriately address these incidents, violate the General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office:

1. General Order 320.5.9 - Conduct

- This order mandates that members promptly report any activities that could lead to criminal prosecution or discipline, whether the member is involved or has knowledge of such activities. The failure to report and discipline Godinez after her behavior at the convenience store violated this order, as her conduct could have resulted in disciplinary action or legal consequences.

Deputy Mia Godinez Inappropriate Behavior and DUI Arrest

- **Subsection e.** Discourteous, disrespectful, or discriminatory treatment of any member of the public or any member of the Sheriff's Office or County is prohibited. Godinez's inappropriate behavior in a public setting violated this provision.
 - **Subsection g.** Criminal, dishonest, or disgraceful conduct, whether on- or off-duty, that adversely affects the member's relationship with the office is prohibited. Godinez's actions, particularly her subsequent DUI, clearly meet these criteria.
 - **Subsection i.** Any other on- or off-duty conduct which members should reasonably know is unbecoming or reflects unfavorably upon the Sheriff's Office is also prohibited. Godinez's actions both at the convenience store and in the DUI arrest reflect poorly on the office, and the lack of discipline exacerbates this issue.
2. **General Order 1016.1 - Purpose and Scope (Fitness for Duty)**
- Monitoring members' fitness for duty is essential for the safety and welfare of the Sheriff's Office and the community. Godinez's behavior while intoxicated demonstrated a clear lack of fitness for duty, and the failure to take immediate action after this incident compromised the safety standards and reputation of the Sheriff's Office.
3. **General Order 1016.2 - Policy (Fitness for Duty)**
- The Putnam County Sheriff's Office is responsible for ensuring that all members are capable of safely and effectively performing their job functions. The lack of disciplinary action following Godinez's inappropriate behavior and subsequent DUI arrest suggests a failure to enforce this policy.
4. **General Order 1016.3 - Member Responsibilities**
- Members are required to maintain physical stamina and psychological stability to safely perform their duties. Godinez's intoxicated behavior at the convenience store and the subsequent DUI arrest indicate that she was not meeting these responsibilities. Additionally, it is the responsibility of members to notify a supervisor if they are unable to perform their duties.
5. **General Order 1016.4 - Supervisor Responsibilities**
- Supervisors are required to be alert to any indication that a member may be unable to safely perform their duties due to an underlying physical or psychological impairment. Godinez's behavior, including irrational conduct, questionable judgment, and the inappropriate use of alcohol, should have prompted an immediate evaluation of her fitness for duty. Sheriff Farris's failure to take such action, despite knowing about these incidents, constitutes a violation of this order.

Additional Concerns

The inaction on the part of Sheriff Farris raises significant concerns about leadership and accountability within the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. Allowing Deputy Godinez to resign without facing appropriate disciplinary measures for her misconduct, and publicly praising her service afterward, reflects a disregard for the ethical standards expected of law enforcement. Moreover, Sheriff Farris's prior knowledge of Godinez's disciplinary issues before hiring her further calls into question his judgment in personnel matters.

Deputy Mia Godinez Inappropriate Behavior and DUI Arrest

Recommendations

1. **Initiate a Formal Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should investigate the failure to discipline Deputy Godinez, as well as the broader implications of Sheriff Farris's leadership in handling these matters.
2. **Enforce Disciplinary Standards:** The Sheriff's Office must strictly enforce its General Orders regarding fitness for duty, conduct, and the handling of misconduct, ensuring that all members are held accountable for their actions.
3. **Implement Improved Hiring Practices:** The Sheriff's Office should review its hiring procedures to prevent the employment of individuals with prior disciplinary issues that may affect their fitness for duty.

Conclusion

Sheriff Eddie Farris's failure to discipline Deputy Mia Godinez following her inappropriate behavior while intoxicated and her subsequent DUI arrest demonstrates a disregard for the ethical standards of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. The failure to take corrective measures, despite knowledge of her past disciplinary issues, has compromised the integrity of the Sheriff's Office and the safety of the community it serves. A thorough investigation and corrective actions are necessary to restore public trust and uphold the values of the Sheriff's Office.

ADVERTISEMENT



Putnam County deputy resigns following DUI charge, car accident

by WZTV

Tue, August 15th 2023 at 3:27 PM



Deputy Mia Godinez (Putnam County Sheriff's Office)



TOPICS: DEPUTY GODINEZ DUI RESIGNED PUTNAM COUNTY CAR ACCIDENT SHERIFF'S OFFICE TENNESSEE I

The Putnam County Sheriff's Office says Deputy Mia Godinez was involved in a single-vehicle wreck in her personal car early Tuesday morning. She was taken to a local hospital and treated for injuries that are not life threatening.

The Tennessee Highway Patrol (THP) told the sheriff's office Godinez will be charged for driving under the influence (DUI) upon her release.

She had been with the sheriff's office for one year, and has resigned.

"Although I am thankful that Deputy Godinez's injuries were non-life threatening, I am saddened by the behavior and outcome of Deputy Godinez," Sheriff Eddie Farris said in a news release. "Deputy Godinez had been a good Deputy and had contributed to this Office during her time as a Deputy."

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REC'D MAY 02 2023



Chief of Police
Bill Randolph

(931) 839-2323
Fax (931) 839-7514

On April 13, 2023 an investigation was conducted involving Officer Zack Glover concerning his participation in an incident which occurred while he was off duty. The alleged incident occurred on March 25, 2023 in Livingston, Tn. Although the current findings of the investigation manifested no criminal infraction or intent, Officer Glover's presence at the scene of said incident was nothing less than unbecoming of an officer.

On April 14, 2023 Officer Glover was given a suspension from his duties for a span of 3 days and his probationary status as a police officer was extended for an additional 12 months beginning on the date of his suspension.

Chief Bill Randolph

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Bill Randolph".

Lt. Michael Phillips

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to read "Lt. Michael Phillips".

TO PROTECT AND TO SERVE

Failure to Investigate Complaints Against Personnel

Formal Complaint – Sheriff Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint addresses Sheriff Eddie Farris's failure to investigate citizen complaints against personnel within the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, as required by the General Orders. Sheriff Farris's actions, or lack thereof, violate the standards set forth by the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) and undermine the accountability and professionalism of the Sheriff's Office.

Summary of Incidents

Sheriff Eddie Farris has ignored multiple citizen complaints against personnel, in violation of General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office:

- **November 2022 Complaint Against Major Michael Ronczkowski:**

In November 2022, Sheriff Farris was notified via certified mail of a complaint against Major Ronczkowski. The complaint involved allegations that Ronczkowski, in his official capacity, requested information from an employee of the warrant division about whether a former employee had interfered with a family member's court appearance. Ronczkowski inquiry was suspicious considering that the former employee had submitted a public records request for Ronczkowski's job description. Sheriff Farris failed to investigate this complaint or respond to the complainant, violating General Orders regarding personnel complaints.

- **September 2023 Complaint Regarding Deputies Escorting a School Bus:**

In September 2023, Sheriff Farris refused to investigate a complaint concerning deputies who were escorting a school bus to a football game on a state highway outside their jurisdiction. The deputies impeded the flow of traffic on a Friday afternoon, creating a hazard for other motorists. Sheriff Farris, through the Rader Law Firm, dismissed the complaint by arguing that the complainant did not have "legal standing" to file the complaint. This rationale contradicts the General Orders, which explicitly allow complaints to be filed anonymously, making the requirement for legal standing irrelevant. Legal standing pertains to complaints pending court action, and since no legal case was pending, this defense was misguided, violating the General Orders regarding personnel complaints.

Violations of General Orders

Sheriff Farris's failure to investigate these complaints constitutes violations of several General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office:

1. **General Order 1010.2 – Policy:**

- The Sheriff's Office is required to take all complaints regarding the service provided by the Office and the conduct of its members seriously. All complaints must be accepted and addressed in accordance with policy and applicable laws.

Failure to Investigate Complaints Against Personnel

2. General Order 1010.3 – Personnel Complaints:

- Personnel complaints include any allegation of misconduct or improper job performance that could violate office policy or laws. Complaints may be made by the public in any form (written, email, in person, etc.), and all should be investigated.

3. General Order 1010.3.2 – Sources of Complaints:

- Complaints may be submitted by any individual from the public in any form, including anonymous and third-party complaints, which must be accepted and investigated to the extent that sufficient information is provided.

4. General Order 1010.6.4 – Dispositions:

- Each personnel complaint must be classified with a disposition (e.g., unfounded, exonerated, not sustained, or sustained) after an investigation. All complaints should be appropriately investigated.

5. General Order 1010.6.6 – Notice to Complainant of Investigation Status:

- An investigator is required to provide the complainant with periodic updates regarding the status of the investigation. There was no communication from the Sheriff's Office regarding the 2022 complaint, and the 2023 was summarily dismissed without following established protocols and procedures, further demonstrating a violation of General Orders.

Additional Concerns

The refusal to investigate these complaints not only breaches internal policies but also undermines the integrity of the Sheriff's Office. Sheriff Farris's actions, particularly the misapplication of the "legal standing" defense, suggest a willful disregard for transparency and accountability. His inaction in both instances sets a dangerous precedent of neglecting citizen complaints, which could compromise public trust in the Sheriff's Office.

Recommendations

- 1. Conduct a Thorough Investigation:** The Ethics Committee should investigate Sheriff Farris's failure to address the complaints filed in November 2022 and September 2023, including whether these actions were deliberate attempts to avoid accountability.
- 2. Assess Accountability:** Determine the extent of Sheriff Farris's responsibility in these cases and whether he violated any laws or internal policies by refusing to investigate the complaints.
- 3. Ensure Compliance with General Orders:** The Ethics Committee should ensure that the Putnam County Sheriff's Office is fully compliant with its General Orders, particularly regarding the acceptance, investigation, and resolution of citizen complaints.
- 4. Provide Additional Training:** The Sheriff's Office should provide additional training for its personnel, particularly its leadership, on the proper handling of complaints in accordance with internal policies and state regulations.

Failure to Investigate Complaints Against Personnel

5. **Improve Transparency:** The Sheriff's Office should implement stronger oversight mechanisms to ensure that all complaints are investigated thoroughly and that complainants are kept informed about the status of their complaints.

Conclusion

Sheriff Eddie Farris's refusal to investigate complaints against personnel in accordance with the General Orders raises serious concerns about the accountability and professionalism of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. His actions violate General Orders and could undermine public trust in the Sheriff's Office. A thorough investigation by the Ethics Committee is necessary to restore transparency and ensure compliance with departmental policies.

LAW OFFICES
MOORE, RADER, FITZPATRICK AND YORK, P.C.

46 NORTH JEFFERSON AVENUE
COOKEVILLE, TENNESSEE

38501

L. DEAN MOORE (1941-2019)
DANIEL H. RADER III
WALTER S. FITZPATRICK III
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DANIEL H. RADER IV
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(931) 526-3092

July 15, 2022

Mr. Terry Hembree

Re: Open Records Request
Putnam County Sheriff's Office

Dear Mr. Hembree:

Pursuant to your Open Records Act request, the following responses are provided:

1. You requested copies of any disciplinary action taken against Mike Ronczkowski.

There are none.

2. You requested a copy of Mike Ronczkowski's job description.

It is attached.

3. You requested copies of all of the Open Records Act requests to the Sheriff's Department in which I have been involved since August of 2020.

Those requests are attached.

To save you money, we are not enclosing copies of the Open Records Act requests submitted by you, since you presumably already have those. However, if you want copies of your own requests, please call my paralegal Heather Jones, or send a note to that effect, and I will copy your requests and send those to you as well.

The pages submitted to you total 44 pages at \$.15 per page. Please forward me a check made payable to the Putnam County Sheriff's Office in the amount of \$6.60 to cover this cost.

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September 18, 2023

Mr. Terry Hembree
[REDACTED]

Re: Letter to Putnam County Sheriff's Office

Dear Mr. Hembree:

I have now had an opportunity to review more thoroughly the letter which you sent dated September 5, 2023 to the Sheriff's Department.

As I previously advised you, many of the assertions which you make in your letter are inaccurate and/or mistaken.

Nevertheless, Sheriff Farris manages an excellent department and, when necessary, his office conducts all appropriate investigations and reviews of incidents that occur.

If you have any specific assertions of outside investigations that need to take place regarding any issues please refer those to Attorney General Bryant Dunaway.

Yours very truly,

MOORE, RADER AND YORK, P. C.


Daniel H. Rader III

DHR/III/hsj

Terry Hembree

November 12, 2024

Jeff Jones
Putnam County Attorney
1420 Neal Street
Cookeville, TN 38501

Dear Jeff,

I am requesting a review of the attached complaints for consideration and presentation to the Putnam County Commission regarding Sheriff William Edward "Eddie" Farris. The complaints outline multiple incidents that raise significant concerns about ethical violations and a failure to adhere to the General Orders of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. These matters highlight serious deficiencies in transparency and accountability, which compromise public trust—essential principles for any public official who has sworn an oath to uphold both the Constitution of Tennessee and the United States, as well as to maintain the integrity and dignity of the office entrusted to them by the community they serve.

Requesting an inquiry into these issues aligns with the Commission's Code of Ethics, adopted in February 2007, given the presence of multiple potential violations of ethical and legal standards that require a thorough investigation. The various infringements of General Orders and ethical guidelines suggest possible malfeasance, misfeasance, and nonfeasance, justifying a formal review in accordance with the Commission's Code of Ethics.

In 2018, the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, led by Sheriff Farris, became a member of the Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) program. This initiative aims to foster transparency, accountability, and compliance with established policies, referred to as General Orders. Supported by taxpayer dollars, TLEA membership reflects a public pledge to uphold these standards. However, Sheriff Farris's actions seem to contradict this commitment. Despite promoting the TLEA membership as a testament to the Sheriff's Office's dedication to accountability and professionalism, the consistent failure to enforce General Orders indicates a significant lapse between public perception and the actual practices within the Sheriff's Office.

Over the past several years, numerous instances of alleged violations have occurred under Sheriff Farris administration. Below is a summary of these allegations:

1. **2018:** Sheriff Farris failed to notify the Tennessee Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Commission of a deputy's resignation amid a criminal investigation, violating POST rules and General Orders.
2. **2018:** Sheriff Farris provided a political candidate with a police escort, failing to extend the same courtesy to the candidate's opponent, violating General Orders regarding political activity.

Terry Hembree

3. **2019:** Sheriff Farris mandated deputies to attend a County Commission meeting in uniform, seemingly to demonstrate solidarity in support of his budget. This necessitated the use of overtime funds, effectively misappropriating taxpayer resources.
4. **2019:** Sheriff Farris participated in a seminar in Las Vegas centered on private security and protection, which appeared to be related to his outside employment. He used an email associated with a private security firm to make reservations associated with the conference, thereby violating General Orders regarding the use of public funds.
5. **2020:** Sheriff Farris improperly responded to a Tennessee Public Records Act (TPRA) request, charging excessive fees, failing to provide an estimate, and not explaining withheld records, violating General Orders.
6. **2020:** Following the DUI arrest of a deputy in a sheriff's office vehicle, Sheriff Farris issued a vague press release, withholding crucial details and failing to update the public on an administrative investigation referenced in the press release violating General Orders regarding internal investigations.
7. **2021:** Sheriff Farris disregarded General Orders by declining to investigate a complaint involving a citizen who had received an anonymous letter seemingly linked to a public records request submitted to the Sheriff's Office.
8. **2021:** Sheriff Farris allowed the creation of a "Ban List" that unlawfully restricted certain individuals from accessing the lobby of the Sheriff's Office. This measure seemed to disproportionately affect critics of the Sheriff's Office and gave rise to concerns about potential violations of established General Orders, particularly since the "Ban List" lacked the backing of a lawful court order.
9. **2022:** Sheriff Farris neglected to investigate a command staff member for making an inquiry about a court case involving the family member of a former employee. This inquiry appeared to be retaliatory, originating from the former employee's request for public records related to the command staff member. The command staff member's inquiry appeared to be in violation of General Orders.
10. **2022:** Sheriff Farris did not discipline a non-certified command staff member who, identifying himself as sheriff's personnel, intervened in an incident in a neighboring county and acted unprofessionally, violating General Orders.
11. **2022:** In a federal lawsuit, Sheriff Farris was accused of obstructing public comments on social media accounts linked to the Sheriff's Office. In his defense, Sheriff Farris filed a sworn affidavit claiming the account in question was his personal account.

Terry Hembree



However, this account contained information related to the official business of the Sheriff's Office, which is prohibited on private social media platforms according to General Orders. Furthermore, it appeared that personnel from the sheriff's office used the account to post updates related to official business. Sheriff Farris's affidavit raises significant concerns considering the contradicting information about the use of the social media account, bringing into question concerns of possible perjury and violations of General Orders.

12. **2023:** Sheriff Farris did not ensure a safe working environment for correctional employees at the Putnam County Jail, who were subjected to hazing by their co-workers. The District Attorney reported this incident to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. Additionally, Sheriff Farris failed to disclose to the public the findings of the investigation and any disciplinary actions taken, thereby violating General Orders.
13. **December 2023:** Sheriff Farris permitted a county official to ride in an unmarked Sheriff's Office SUV equipped with flashing blue lights during a Christmas parade. The vehicle displayed signs identifying the official, who has since declared their candidacy for county mayor in 2026. This situation raises concerns about the misuse of Sheriff's Office resources for promotional purposes, potentially violating General Orders.
14. **2023:** Sheriff Farris failed to investigate deputies who escorted a school bus out of the county on a state highway during rush hour on a Friday afternoon, disrupting traffic flow and creating hazards, in violation of General Orders.
15. **2023–2024:** Numerous inmates experienced drug overdoses in the Putnam County Jail, resulting in taxpayer-funded medical costs. Sheriff Farris's failure to secure the jail violated General Orders.
16. **2024:** A violent sex offender escaped from jail near a school that was in session, yet the school was not notified and no lockdown was issued. Sources indicate that this delay was intended to reduce embarrassment for the sheriff's office and constituted a violation of General Orders.

Furthermore, other incidents included Sheriff Farris's failure to investigate fake social media accounts that were created to harass critics of the Sheriff's Office. There was also the improper handling of a firearm by a deputy, which led to an accidental discharge of a high-powered rifle, creating a safety hazard and causing damage to the Sheriff's Office command post vehicle. Additionally, Sheriff Farris hired law enforcement officers who had previously been terminated or resigned under scrutiny, thereby circumventing the General Order concerning hiring standards.

Additional Concerns Regarding Retaliation Against Whistleblowers

Sources have reported that Sheriff Farris has threatened employees to keep them from revealing internal issues within the Sheriff's Office.

Terry Hembree

Sources indicate that Sheriff Farris has conducted meetings in which he cautioned employees that any leak of internal issues could lead to them "never working in law enforcement again." These actions appear retaliatory, targeting potential whistleblowers in direct violation of Tennessee's whistleblower protections (Tennessee Code Annotated 50-1-304). Furthermore, such intimidation tactics could constitute official misconduct (Tennessee Code Annotated 39-16-402) and official oppression (Tennessee Code Annotated 39-16-403). These threats, particularly if directed at employees attempting to report legal violations, are unlawful and warrant serious investigation.

Concerns Regarding Jail Funding and Staffing Misallocation

Additionally, the recent expansion of the Putnam County Jail has resulted in millions of dollars in expenses borne by taxpayers. Sources have reported that despite requests for more personnel, the facility is reportedly critically understaffed, which has contributed to assaults on correctional officers and heightened safety risks. Sources suggest that Sheriff Farris may have redirected funds allocated for correctional staffing to other non-correctional positions, raising concerns about the potential misallocation of resources that are supposed to maintain safety within the jail.

Conclusion

In response to these allegations, the Putnam County Commission's Code of Ethics, established in 2007, mandates that an Ethics Committee investigate serious accusations against county officials. The recent indictment of the Monterey Police Chief for official misconduct involving the misuse of public funds highlights the gravity of such issues and underscores the need for a thorough and impartial investigation into the complaints against Sheriff Farris. As Tennessee Comptroller Jason Mumpower pointed out concerning the inquiry into the Monterey Police Chief, these instances "raise serious ethical concerns," a sentiment that equally applies to the allegations against Sheriff Farris, given the significant similarities between the two cases.

I want to emphasize that I am not implying the Monterey Police Chief is guilty of any misconduct; he is presumed innocent until proven guilty, just as Sheriff Farris deserves the same presumption. However, given the Comptroller's choice to investigate the Monterey Police Chief due to significant ethical concerns, it is only reasonable that the same principle be applied to Sheriff Farris.

I have acquired documents through public records requests that offer support for several of these allegations, and I have attached some of them to provide further clarity and context. While these documents may not serve as direct evidence, they are included to provide relevant context. For instance, the photo of the Sheriff's Office Command Post is included to illustrate its general appearance; however, it does not serve as evidence of the damage referred to in the complaint.

Attached are specific complaints that detail allegations and outline violations of certain General Orders. Additionally, should this issue be included in the agenda for the Commission or Ethics Committee, Tennessee Public Chapter 300, which took effect on July 1, 2023, allows for public comments during the review process. I believe there are members of the public who are willing to address the Commission regarding these allegations.

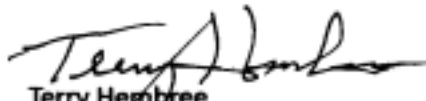
Terry Hembree



If you have questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


Terry Hembree

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Failure to Properly Address Accidental Discharge of Firearm

Formal Complaint Against Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris

To: Putnam County Commission Ethics Committee

Purpose of Complaint

This complaint addresses the failure of Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris to uphold public safety and adhere to Tennessee Law Enforcement Accreditation (TLEA) standards following an on-duty firearm discharge by a deputy. Despite the Sheriff Department's accreditation by TLEA in 2018, Sheriff Farris neglected to follow General Orders relating to the discharge of a firearm, putting public safety at risk and displaying a disregard for proper firearms handling protocols.

Summary of Incident

While on duty, a deputy from the Putnam County Sheriff's Department discharged his patrol rifle at the county school bus garage, which features multiple fueling islands for the purpose of refueling county vehicles, including Sheriff's Office vehicles. For reasons still unknown, the deputy took his rifle out of the patrol vehicle, aimed it at the Sheriff's Department Command Post, and fired, causing considerable property damage. The bullet went through the Command Post's windshield, damaged the seats, and hit the interior walls. The expenses for the repairs were borne by taxpayers. This incident reveals multiple safety and procedural violations, indicating a breach of the essential firearm handling training that deputies receive annually.

Key Safety Concerns

1. **Unsafe Firearm Handling**
 - o Deputies are trained to handle all firearms as if loaded, performing safety checks before handling. Handling the rifle and discharging it at the fuel island disregarded these procedures, endangering both the deputy and nearby personnel.
2. **Proximity to Fuel Pumps**
 - o The discharge of a firearm near fuel pumps emitting flammable fumes could have ignited upon contact with the rifle's muzzle flash, presenting a substantial fire hazard.
3. **Public Safety at Risk**
 - o Across the street from the garage is a Walmart shopping center, frequented by the public. If the rifle had been pointed in that direction, it could have posed a severe risk of injury or death.
4. **Lack of Proper Reporting and Accountability**
 - o Sheriff Farris failed to address or publicly report the incident, keeping it quiet to avoid potential embarrassment, undermining public trust, and violating his duty to enforce disciplinary standards within his office.

Violations of General Orders

1. **General Order 203.4.1 - In-Service Mandated Training**
 - o Deputies are required to complete firearms training, including safe handling, yet this incident reflects a disregard for these standards and protocols.
2. **General Order 306.2 - Firearms Policy**
 - o The Sheriff's Office is responsible for ensuring deputies handle firearms safely to protect public safety. The Sheriff's failure to enforce this policy places the public at risk.

Failure to Properly Address Accidental Discharge of Firearm

3. **General Order 306.5 - Safe Handling, Inspection, and Storage**
 - **Section (a):** Prohibits unnecessary firearm handling. The deputy's actions in handling the rifle at the fuel station were unnecessary and unsafe.
 - **Section (c):** Firearms may not be loaded or unloaded except in designated areas; handling firearms at a fuel island violated this policy.
4. **General Order 306.6 - Firearms Training and Qualifications**
 - This policy mandates annual firearms training and adherence to proper handling techniques. The deputy's actions suggest a lack of training reinforcement or failure in Sheriff Farris's oversight.
5. **General Order 306.7 - Firearm Discharge**
 - This order mandates that any discharge of a firearm be reported verbally to a supervisor. The Sheriff's failure to make this incident public demonstrates a disregard for transparency.
6. **General Order 320.5.7 - Efficiency**
 - **Section (a):** Neglect of duty. Sheriff Farris neglected his duty by failing to address the safety violations in this incident, impacting the efficiency and credibility of his office.
7. **General Order 320.5.10 - Safety**
 - **Section (a):** Violates safe working practices and standards.
 - **Section (d):** Unsafe handling of firearms, as shown by the deputy's improper discharge near fuel pumps, which posed a fire risk.
8. **General Order 323.5 - Required Reporting**
 - **Section 323.5.2(g):** Requires a report for any firearm discharge.
 - **Section 323.5.5(b):** Requires a report for damage to County property, which Sheriff Farris failed to make available to the public.
9. **General Order 1010.12 - Disciplinary Procedures**
 - Disciplinary actions are designed to uphold the Code of Conduct. Sheriff Farris's failure to impose appropriate disciplinary measures undermines public confidence and the ethical standards of the Sheriff's Office.

Recommendations

1. **Immediate Investigation and Audit**
 - Conduct an internal investigation into the incident, reviewing the Sheriff's handling of the matter and failure to impose disciplinary actions.
2. **Transparency and Public Reporting**
 - The Ethics Committee should require that all incidents involving public safety risks, such as firearm discharges, be reported publicly to maintain transparency and public trust.
3. **Re-Evaluation of Firearms Training**
 - Sheriff Farris should ensure deputies receive comprehensive refresher courses on firearm safety, focusing on handling firearms in public and around hazardous areas.
4. **Disciplinary Action and Accountability**
 - Require Sheriff Farris to implement appropriate disciplinary action against the deputy involved and to address his own oversight in failing to report the incident and uphold the department's Code of Conduct.

Failure to Properly Address Accidental Discharge of Firearm

Conclusion

Sheriff Farris's inaction in the wake of this incident demonstrates a lack of regard for public safety, Sheriff's Office policy, and ethical standards, thereby damaging public trust. The Ethics Committee is urged to take immediate action to investigate, enforce appropriate disciplinary procedures, and require transparency to restore confidence in the Putnam County Sheriff's Office.

