

## RELATIONSHIP/COMMUNICATION

I am here to discuss some issues that have been recently in the Observer Dispatch as well as issues within the Utica Police Department. My name is Tom Brady and I am the Police Union President for the Utica Police Department. I am also a Patrol supervisor who works the evening shift.

The recent "Relationship" between the DA's Office and the Chief of Police sounds familiar because the Police Union shares a very similar relationship. There is no conversation or negotiation. The only communication is now limited to Certified mail or Grievance hearings. The dozen or so Grievances filed by the PBA since this Chief has taken over is probably equal to if not close to the number of grievances filed during former Chief Rotundo's approximate 35 year tenure as Chief. Chief Pylman has completed 6 years.

These Grievances have cost the membership a great deal of money as we have had to pay our attorney to fight for basic rights, many of which we enjoyed for years until they were taken away. If you mess with someone's time off, pay or health insurance, this is what happens. The City of Utica Tax Payers have also had to pay a great deal of money with this Chief going directly to an attorney out of Albany to fight these grievances and not using the Corporation Council's Office.

## CULTURE OF FEAR

Since Chief Pylman has taken over as Chief of Police in 2001, there have been approximately 50 officers appointed to the job. This is close to one-third of the departments compliment. The department has gone very quickly from an agency of highly experienced officers to one that is becoming dominated by less experienced or even inexperienced officers still learning the wide range of skills that are necessary to master their profession.

These young officers are at times apprehensive and even scared to make decisions on the job. This "Culture of fear" as I will call it, is fostered and promoted by the command leadership of the Utica Police Department, because these young men and woman are criticized unduly and harshly as well as being subject to severe and excessive discipline.

As a patrol supervisor who works during the 4pm to midnight shift, I see these effects on a daily basis. This "culture of fear" is no way to run any agency or organization. If this is allowed to continue, it will have devastating effects. In my opinion, the quality of services rendered to the citizens will diminish and the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Department will suffer. These new officers will fear making any decisions so as to avoid making the wrong one and being punished.

But even more Important to me is that if this continues at the rate it is going, it will have a devastating impact on the safety and well-being of the men and women of the Utica Police Department. Simply put, Police officers who are hesitant or fearful of making decisions, let alone split second life or death decisions, are going to get hurt and injured or maybe even killed.

## MORALE

Now let's talk Morale.

It is the worst I have ever seen it in my 15 years with the Department. The low morale is most visible on the streets in patrol. I can speak for myself when I say "I used to love my job and couldn't wait to come to work". Now I can't wait to retire because I dread coming to work. The only change from today and 15 years ago is the leadership. The sad thing is, as the union President, I hear this from more and more people.

Knowing what I have told you about discipline, if it was at least issued equitably, the membership would at least be able to know we are all in the same boat, but that is not the case.

As PBA president I am not at liberty to discuss any specifics of my members' disciplinary cases. In some cases, I am not even informed of penalties imposed on my members because they negotiate their own settlements with the administration. However, I do have reason to believe that penalties sought and/or imposed are not only unequal, but unfair considering the alleged misconduct because of the persons' relationship with the Chief. If the Common Council is interested in reviewing the penalties and the corresponding misconduct for officers over the past several years, I am certain they can get that information and come to their own conclusion.

Apparently, then discipline is different, in my opinion, depending on who you are and your relationship with the ~~Chief~~ *administration*.

Being a police officer is often a thankless job but you cope with that when you know that you have a bond with your fellow officers and the support of the administration. Regrettably, for all involved, I believe we don't have that support. It is a sad state of affairs for a community when its police department is made up of officers who are just counting the days to their retirement because they dread going to work.

The membership of the PBA contains a great number of dedicated, highly intelligent people.

They have the ability, knowledge and talent to significantly enhance the overall image of the Police Department and improve the law enforcement services to the citizens of Utica. However, this potential has been stifled in my opinion by the lack of respect and trust that the administration has for its police force.

To conclude, it is the opinion of the John E. Creedon Police Benevolent Association that the citizens of Utica deserve much better and that the men and women of the Utica Police Department deserve much better too.