

Thursday October 30, 2014

On this day I went to the Human Resources department in city hall in Hartford to file a complaint pertaining to remarks made to me by Interim Assistant Fire Chief, Deputy Chief Terry Waller. This complaint is concerning my requested testimony under subpoena to the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health regarding firefighter Douglas Caldwell.

I met with Deputy Director of Human Resources John Burn. During our meeting Mr. Burn asked if my complaint was EEOC based, one of the protected groups, or if it was discriminatory in nature. I replied that I was not sure how it would be classified.

Mr. Burn asked what the nature of the complaint was (I had already identified myself as a fire Captain in the Hartford Fire Department). I explained to him that I was subpoenaed for testimony in the administrative case of Douglas Caldwell by the department of public health pertaining to the suspension of his Emergency Medical Responder certificate, to give testimony on September 17th 2014. I had previously reported firefighter Caldwell on reasonable suspicion of alcohol use and being unfit for duty to the department. I explained the circumstances as follows.

I was requested to report to city hall's corporation council on September 16th 2014 at 9:30 to meet with Catherine Freeman in order to "prep" for my testimony and on what to expect, during this meeting with Catherine Freeman she asked about what happened the day I wrote a Fire Service memo reporting the reasonable suspicion. I explained my experiences with Douglas Caldwell. I advised her that if the time for the hearing was changed from the 9:30 hr. on the next day I would be unable to attend as I had prior commitments. Later that day the time was changed to 1:30 and Ms. Freeman sent me an email (and the email from DPH) notifying of the change to 1:30, I replied that I would not be able to make it and she replied that they would arrange to take my testimony at a later time.

Later in the day (late afternoon) Interim Assistant Fire Chief, Deputy Chief Waller called me to inform me of the changes to the hearing time. I told him that I knew and that Catherine Freeman had informed me of the change. I told him I would not be able to attend due to my prior commitment in the afternoon.

Chief Waller then started to expound on as to how he "did not know why an outside agency was doing this" and "that it was already being handled internally by the fire department and the city". He said that he wondered why someone was pursuing this line of action, saying that "We take care of our own, "the strong take care of the weak".

Chief Waller then made statements that "exposing all this puts a black eye on us as firemen", "that it puts us in a bad light, people are looking at us and it reflects poorly having this out there".

I replied to Chief Waller that in no way do Caldwell's inappropriate actions reflect poorly on me. I told him that I try to do the right things for the right reasons and that when I put my head on my pillow I rest peacefully knowing I tried to do the right things and Caldwell's action cause me no shame or embarrassment .

Chief Waller then made a statement to me that “you don’t not have to go up there and blow things up or sensationalize things”. I told Chief Waller that I would answer any questions asked truthfully, period.

Chief Waller then remarked about me being a smart guy, having a valuable and desirable skill set and that my future in the Hartford Fire Department was promising. Chief Waller then made a remark that I took to be threatening, Chief Waller stated that I would not want that career promise to be jeopardized by my testimony at this hearing. I took this to mean retaliation for speaking out, I took this to mean that somehow my possibility of promotion or advancement would be jeopardized by going before the DPH and giving full and truthful testimony.

I again told Chief Waller that I would in my testimony be answering truthfully and completely.

My concerns were later amplified as I realized the possibility of him being the next Assistant Chief of the department and possibly the Chief along with his personal relationship and influence with the city’s Corporation Counsel Sandra Kee Borges.

In conveying my concerns to Mr. Burn I explained my disbelief and shock as Chief Waller made those threatening remarks.

Luis Ocasio

Fire Captain

Hartford Fire Department