



GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Thomas J. Bensley, Sheriff • Michael Shea, Undersheriff

Administration

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Corrections

320 Washington Street, Traverse City, MI 49684-2583 • (231) 922-4530 • FAX (231) 922-4415

May 9, 2019

Mr. Todd Ritter
1285 N. Pioneer Road
Beulah, MI 49617

Dear Mr. Ritter:

On or about October 27, 1997, you were hired by the Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Office as a part-time Corrections Officer. On or about September 8, 1998, you became a full-time Corrections Officer and were promoted to Corrections Sergeant on October 6, 2003. You were promoted to Corrections Lieutenant on February 23, 2015 and subsequently to Corrections Captain/Jail Administrator on August 4, 2015.

Michael Shea was appointed to the position of Undersheriff for the Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Office on October 29, 2018. As part of his responsibilities he advised all sheriff's office employees that an open door policy existed and volunteered to meet with any sheriff's office staff regarding any issues or concerns they had regarding the sheriff's office. Over the next several months Undersheriff Shea had several meetings with corrections officers and spoke with other individuals in an attempt to confirm or deny rumors, innuendo and accusations of misconduct by you over the past several years.

As a result of Undersheriff Shea's investigation, you were placed on paid administrative leave on April 4, 2019. You were advised that you would be provided with the opportunity to be heard in response to the allegations made against you and an opportunity to refute and/or add explanation to those allegations thru a Laudermill Hearing.

On April 11, 2019, you submitted a letter of resignation to Sheriff Thomas Bensley. On April 12, 2019, you were provided with a letter that indicated your resignation had not been accepted by the Sheriff's Office and further indicated that we had to determine through our on-going investigation whether or not you had violated several sheriff's office policies and procedures and general orders that would compel the termination of your employment with the Sheriff's Office. In lieu of termination you agreed to and did sign a settlement agreement which allowed you to resign from the



Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Office and, on April 26, 2019, the Sheriff's Office formally accepted your resignation.

Throughout this process the Sheriff's Office had continued the investigation into alleged violations of General Orders and Policies and Procedures. As a result of that investigation, numerous General Order and Policy and Procedure violations have been identified, verified and corroborated and are identified as follows:

1. In July/August 2017, you sought out Witness 3 on the Tinder dating app using an alias, telling her that you "knew her from the jail" and that you were from "the other side of the bars." At the time, you knew that Witness 3 had recently been an inmate of the GT jail (during June 2017) where you were the Jail Administrator. You thereafter began an intimate relationship with Witness 3 that lasted approximately six weeks. During the time that you and Witness 3 were in an intimate relationship, you knew that Witness 3 was on supervised felony probation out of Benzie County. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:
 - General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
 - General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
 - General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
 - Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.

2. During your relationship with Witness 3, you smoked marijuana in Witness 3's presence using a vape pen, offering her the marijuana (which she declined) when you knew that Witness 3 was on supervised felony probation out of Benzie County. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:
 - General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
 - General Order 4.002, Conformance to Laws;
 - General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
 - General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
 - Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.

3. You asked Witness 3 if she would accompany you to McGee's bar (which she declined), when you knew that Witness 3 was on supervised felony probation out of Benzie County, and that her presence in a bar would constitute a violation of her probation. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:
 - General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;

- General Order 4.002, Conformance to Laws;
 - General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
 - General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
 - Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.
4. You brought 4-5 drug test kits to Witness 3 (which she did not ask for) for her to use, telling her that you took them from the GT Jail. You engaged in this conduct when you knew that Witness 3 was on supervised felony probation out of Benzie County, and that she was subject to mandatory drug testing as a condition of her probation. You advised Witness 3 that it was “okay” for you to bring her the drug test kits because she “did not have an open case in Grand Traverse County.” This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:
- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
 - General Order 4.002, Conformance to Laws;
 - General Order 4.004, Neglect of Duty;
 - General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
 - General Order 4.014, Abuse of Position;
 - General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
 - Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.
5. You frequently drove to Witness 3’s home to bring her coffee in the morning and lunch in the afternoon while you were on duty, wearing your uniform, and in a GTSO vehicle. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:
- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
 - General Order 4.004, Neglect of Duty;
 - General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
 - General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
 - Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.

6. On August 15-16, 2017, you took Witness 3 on a trip to Lansing with you, telling her it was work-related, and spent the night with Witness 3 at the Radisson Hotel. You submitted the hotel expense of \$192.55 to the GTSO. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:

- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
- General Order 4.004, Neglect of Duty;
- General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
- General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
- Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.

7. Around the middle of August 2017, you unexpectedly showed up in the middle of the night – between 3:00 a.m. and 3:30 a.m. – in the hospital room of Witness 1, who had been transferred from the jail to Munson due to a medical issue. Former Dep. Brandon Veenstra was on hospital duty with Witness 1. Shortly before you appeared in Witness 1's hospital room, Witness 1 had confided in Dep. Veenstra that you were having a relationship with Witness 3. Witness 1's boyfriend, Witness 6, who was Facebook friends with you, contacted you and told you that Witness 1 was in Munson. When you showed up in the middle of the night, you did not tell Dep. Veenstra why you were there but ordered him to go take a break. After you left, Witness 1 did not say anything more to Dep. Veenstra about you having a relationship with Witness 3. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:

- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
- General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
- General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
- Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.

8. You had an intimate relationship with Witness 2 for a period of approximately seven years, during which time you made “booty” calls to her and treated her as your “side-thing.” You engaged in this relationship with Witness 2 when you knew that she had been an inmate of the GT jail while you were employed at the jail. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:

- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
- General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
- Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.

9. During your relationship with Witness 2, when you knew that Witness 2 was on probation through Grand Traverse County, you asked her to meet you in the basement of the Governmental Center and took her into a closet where you kissed her and engaged in intimate touching. When you engaged in this conduct, you were on duty and in uniform. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:

- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
- General Order 4.004, Neglect of Duty;
- General Order 4.014, Abuse of Position;
- General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
- Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.

10. You brought marijuana with you when you visited Witness 2, advising her that you ordered your marijuana from out of state, and smoked marijuana with her. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:

- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
- General Order 4.002, Conformance to Laws;
- General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
- General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
- Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.

11. You engaged in favoritism and bias towards Inmate A when you approved her for trustee status in a preferred trustee position cleaning the administrative offices when you knew that: she was in Segregation (which was against jail policy); she had an extensive disciplinary record while in the jail with many CO write-ups; she did not get along with other female inmates; Population Coordinator Dep. Bielewicz, who was in charge of placement of inmates in trustee status positions, did not agree that Inmate A should be a trustee; the majority of the deputies at the GT jail disagreed with your decision to place Inmate A on trustee status; and Administrative Sgt. Newcomb specifically challenged you on your decision to place Inmate A on trustee status after her first day in the position cleaning the administrative offices. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:

- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
- General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;

- General Order 4.027, Treatment of Prisoner in Custody;
 - General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
 - Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017; and
 - Division Directive-Inmate Work Details 7.040.
12. You further engaged in favoritism and bias towards Inmate A when you told the administrative assistants to use funds from the inmate profit account to purchase a pizza for Inmate A for lunch, with the toppings of her choosing, when the inmate profit account was never previously used for an individual trustee working at the jail, but rather for groups of trustees on special detail assignments, such as community service projects. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:
- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
 - General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
 - General Order 4.027, Treatment of Prisoner in Custody;
 - General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
 - Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017.
13. You engaged in favoritism and bias towards Inmate B when you allowed her to serve her Kankaska County sentence at the GT Jail rather than the Kankaska County Jail when the GT Jail was overcrowded at the time to the point that overflow inmates were being transported to the Leelanau County jail, at a cost to the County, due to the overcrowding. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:
- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
 - General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
 - General Order 4.027, Treatment of Prisoner in Custody;
 - General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
 - Division Directive-Correctional Officer/Inmate Conduct Policy 7.017; and
 - Correctional Division Policy and Procedure Fees 7.061.
14. On your County-issued cell phone, you kept sexually explicit photos showing female breasts, vaginas, crotches and butts; females engaging in sexually explicit acts including

sexual intercourse and oral sex; females posing in their underwear; several selfies of a man's erect penis; a video of a man masturbating with a man's voice in the background saying a woman's name; a picture of yourself with your tongue protruding out of his mouth making a sexual gesture; and various other sexually suggestive and/or otherwise inappropriate photos and images. You also had messaging conversations with females, including one such "conversation" over the time period of March 2 to March 8, 2019, during which several sexually suggestive photos of the female were attached to messages, which were encouraged by you, containing texts discussing what you planned to do with the female when you met, referencing "licking" her, oral sex and other sexual fantasies. The written and pictorial information found on your cell phone was quite voluminous. This conduct was in violation of the following GTSO policies and procedures:

- General Order 4.001, Unbecoming Conduct;
- General Order 4.008, Unsatisfactory Performance;
- General Order 4.045, Policies and Procedures; and
- Administrative Directives 1.047, Expectation of Privacy - Electronic Communications

Based on the number, severity, and egregious nature of your conduct, I find that your violation of the above Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Office Policies and Procedures and General Orders would have constituted just cause for termination pursuant to Article 7, Section 8I Just Cause, of the Agreement between the Grand Traverse County Board of Commissioners and the Sheriff of Grand Traverse County and Teamsters Local 214 Lieutenants and Captains Bargaining Unit, if you had not previously submitted and the Sheriff's Office accepted your resignation on April 26, 2019.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Bensley, Sheriff
Grand Traverse County

TJB/mdf