



**N2** Office Products **Copy Systems** **Office Furniture** **Office Supplies**

Your local office superstore since 1963. Competitive prices. Exceptional Services.

**SEARCH**

CONNECT



[login](#) | [register](#) | [about us](#)

- [NEWS](#)
- [SPORTS & OUTDOORS](#)
- [ENTERTAINMENT](#)
- [OPINION](#)
- [PHOTOS](#)
- [BLOGS](#)
- [EVENTS](#)
- [FREE CLASSIFIEDS](#)

[E-mail Story](#) [Print](#)  
[Comments \(13\)](#) [Total](#) [on](#) Monday Mar. 5, 2012

1

Lake County Investigations Meet Resistance  
 Law officials decry "smear campaign;" cases move forward



Beacon file photo

By Myers Reece, 12-07-11

On Aug. 11, a group including some of Lake County's most powerful officials traveled to Helena to address the Montana Public Safety Officer Standards and Training Council about multiple investigations into Lake County law enforcement, putting pressure on the council to reconsider its investigation procedures.

Lake County Attorney Mitch Young, Polson-Ronan City Attorney James Raymond, Sheriff Jay Doyle, Undersheriff Karey Reynolds, Ronan Police Chief Dan Wadsworth and Polson Police Chief Doug Chase showed up at Montana Public Safety Officer Standards and Training Council's (POST) regularly scheduled Aug. 11 meeting, along with a number of Lake County citizens.

In a six-page letter to POST, Raymond decried the organization's "smear campaign" and at the meeting told the council the investigations have had "definite negative impacts for us in the criminal justice system," while Young accused POST Executive Director Wayne Ternes of performing his job improperly.

"They took some shots at me, but that's OK – I've got broad shoulders," Ternes said last week. "I believe what they wanted to do was put it to rest that day. But that's not how the process works."



Beginning last year, POST has opened at least a dozen ethics investigations into Lake County law enforcement officers and has received more complaints that, as of yet, haven't become full investigations. Also, a Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks investigation has turned up a number of allegations of poaching and illegal activities by Lake County law officers, as the Beacon reported on Nov. 23.

Ternes said the sheer number of complaints lodged against Lake County law enforcement officers is unprecedented in his experience, as is the fact that every major law agency within a single geographical area is potentially implicated, including the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Law and Order, Polson Police Department, Ronan Police Department and Lake County Sheriff's Office.

Ray Murray, who says he is the longest-serving member on the 13-member POST council, has never seen a situation like the one in Lake County.

"I've been on the council since 1996 and I can't recall another collection of complaints of the magnitude that we've seen in Lake County in that time period," Murray told the Beacon last week. "I do not recall ever seeing this number of complaints restricted to a geographical area like that."

The POST council is a quasi-judicial independent board administered through the Department of Justice, tasked with establishing and maintaining public officer standards across the state. In addition to conducting and approving training, the council is responsible for both certification and recertification for law officers, as well as revocation or suspension of certification. The governor appoints its 13 board members.

Both POST and FWP have ongoing investigations into Lake County law enforcement, while the state Department of Justice passed the results of its own investigation over to Young, the Lake County attorney, several months ago. Jim Kropp, FWP's chief of law enforcement, and John Strandell, chief of the state Department of Justice's criminal investigation division, were in attendance at the August POST meeting.

At the meeting, it was also noted that investigations into Lake County law enforcement by the state Attorney General's Office and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives had been closed.

Two POST investigations, one involving Lake County Sheriff's Deputy Dan Duryee and another involving Ronan Police Chief Wadsworth, are heading toward a contested case hearing possibly within "the next 30 to 60 days," according to POST compliance officer Clay Coker. Duryee and Wadsworth will have an opportunity to present their defense and the council will make a decision for action, which could range from dismissing the issue to permanently revoking their law certification.

Last year, an investigation conducted by Coker concluded that Duryee lied about his military record for more than a decade and was granted command of the Special Response Team without formal training based on his false military record. Coker's report also found that Duryee allegedly removed skull fragments from a suicide victim to give to his girlfriend, another deputy who wanted the skull pieces to train her cadaver dog for search and rescue, among other allegations.

Following Coker's report, Duryee was briefly placed on administrative leave and then returned to the force after completing his requirements, which included a psychological evaluation. At the time, Ternes said Duryee was cleared to resume duty. But Ternes recently said more allegations have arisen against the deputy, resulting in the current investigation. It's unclear exactly what those new allegations are since POST cannot discuss ongoing investigations.

Doyle told POST that his predecessor, Sheriff Lucky Larson, was legally advised not to fire Duryee.

"So Sheriff Larson decided not to," Doyle said at the Helena meeting. "The decisions that Sheriff Larson did or did not do (were) not mine to make."

Wadsworth is accused of falsifying documents. In a May 19 letter to Sheriff Doyle, Ternes said he had determined Wadsworth falsified documents to make them state that a Montana Law Enforcement Academy student had been hired by the Ronan Police Department when he had not. Doyle was notified because, Ternes wrote, the alleged false documents brought attention to a lapse in Undersheriff Reynolds' work history. When Doyle was elected sheriff after the 2010 election, he brought on Reynolds as his undersheriff.

"During this subsequent investigation it has been found that the last year of verifiable work for the Ronan Police Department by Mr. Karey Reynolds was 2000 and not what has been stated by Chief Wadsworth," Ternes wrote to Doyle.

By state law, Reynolds cannot have a break in law enforcement service of greater than 36 months to meet certification standards. Ternes requested that Reynolds attend the Montana Law Enforcement Academy. According to Coker, Reynolds is expected to finish his 12-week basic training course at the academy in Helena this week, meeting his hiring requirements.

Wadsworth could not be reached before the Beacon went to press but in past news articles he has denied falsifying documents.

There are at least two or three more investigations making their way to the hearing level, Coker said. He could not go into details but confirmed they involve law "agencies within Lake County."

Ternes said a lack of access to confidential criminal investigation information has made it difficult to determine whether other investigations are warranted beyond those currently open, though he has heard a number of complaints that could prompt action by POST. Ternes notes that POST investigations may ultimately declare complaints to be unsubstantiated.

"We don't have anything official with Polson police but what we're hearing is that if we see whatever investigation files that took place we might see something," Ternes said.

Ternes also indicated the appearance of Chase, Polson's former police chief, at the Aug. 11 meeting may have raised questions for the POST council. Chase was police chief at the time of the meeting but announced his resignation later that month to spend more time with his family, according to an editorial he wrote in the Lake County Leader.

"There's nothing open in Polson, yet former Police Chief Chase felt it was important to give this long speech about what was going on in his department and we didn't have anything open," Ternes said. "It got kind of weird."

At the meeting, Chase said his "heart was saddened" by the continual resurfacing of "unproven allegations" and "unfounded rumors," which he said had become a distraction for his agency.

"These officers' reputations have been tarnished," Chase said. "It has created unbelievable stress on the part of these officers, their marriages, and created untold discomfort which has led, at least in our agency, several of our officers to question whether they wish to continue in this career."

Chase discussed the heated atmosphere during the 2010 Lake County sheriff's election, in which a number of accusations against the sheriff's department came to light, including some detailed in FWP and POST investigation documents.

"The sad thing about all of this is that even though some of the allegations indeed may have been factual, they were all past the statute of limitations," Chase told POST.

On multiple occasions, Chase addressed Ternes and Coker by name, describing them as well intentioned but off base in their investigations.

"While I am certainly not accusing Mr. Ternes or Clay Coker of intentionally abusing their power, I do think in this matter this is exactly what appears to have occurred," the police chief said.

"I hope you will agree," he added, "until the end justifies the means, that nothing should be activated directly or indirectly against my officers by POST."

Young echoed a common sentiment among the Lake County officials who spoke at the meeting, describing POST's tactics as unfair and improper. He said Ternes hasn't been forthright and has kept both Lake County's law enforcement and attorneys in the dark about investigations.

"There's a reason why your credibility, at least in Lake County, is suffering a little bit," Young said.

"The problem's this," he added. "You folks have a job to do – we understand that and respect that – but it needs to be done right. And if you want to be respected, you have to behave in a respectable manner."

But Ternes says it's Lake County officials who are being uncooperative. He said other law agencies such as the Billings Police Department regularly supply his office with information when issues arise.

"We're not being given any information, or very little, (by Lake County)," Ternes said. "We've just felt like we were running into some resistance there."

Also, Ternes said in Cascade County, the only county to have almost as many POST investigations as Lake in the past two years, nearly all of the complaints of misconduct have come from the agencies themselves. In Lake County, they have all come from citizens or other investigating agencies. Ternes said the diversity of the citizens bringing forth complaints is significant.

"When you get a lot of people across the board and they're not all connected, they're not all working at one place, they're truck drivers, retired, all across the board, and they all have pretty much the same information," Ternes said, "there's got to be something to it."

**RELATED:** ['Misguided Brotherhood'](#)

On 12-10-11, SteelCon commented....

About 25 years ago, the FBI busted a retired LAPD Detective who was running an International Car Theft Ring, U.S. stolen cars into Canada. The retired LAPD detective told the FBI he had valuable information concerning deep-rooted police corruption inside the LAPD. The retired LAPD detective...

[View comments \(13 total\)](#) or [Submit your own](#)

## Spring Duct Cleaning

Get Your Ducts Cleaned & Furnace  
Tuned Up for One Low Price!



**COMFORT SYSTEMS USA**  
**Carson Brothers**



**752-2778**

Some restrictions apply. Ask about rebates.

[www.carsonbrothersmontana.com](http://www.carsonbrothersmontana.com)

- [MOST COMMENTS](#)
- [NEW COMMENTS](#)
- [POPULAR](#)

- [Montana Federal Judge Says He Sent Racist Obama Email \(33 Comments\)](#)  
Scott Ernest said: "You're welcome, Miss Josephine."