



## OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

### Closed Case Summary

Complaint Number OPA#2016-0282

Issued Date: 02/28/2017

Named Employee #1	
Allegation #1	<u>Seattle Police Department Manual</u> 5.001 (9) Standards and Duties: Employees Shall Strive to be Professional at all Times (Policy that was issued April 1, 2015)
OPA Finding	<b>Sustained</b>
Final Discipline	15 Day Suspension

#### **INCIDENT SYNOPSIS**

The Named Employee received coaching from her supervisor.

#### **COMPLAINT**

The complainant, a supervisor within the Department, alleged that the Named Employee had been coached by a supervisor and responded by blind copying other employees in the unit, making the supervisor feel as though she was being harassed and publicly humiliated.

#### **INVESTIGATION**

The OPA investigation included the following actions:

1. Review of the complaint
2. Search for and review of all relevant records and other evidence
3. Interviews of SPD employees

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION**

The preponderance of the evidence from this investigation showed that the Named Employee sent an email to her acting supervisor. In addition to the acting supervisor, the Named Employee listed 19 people as recipients of this email. Only three of the 19 were visible recipients on the email. The 16 other recipients were “blind copied.” This meant that the acting supervisor, to whom the email was primarily addressed, did not know from looking at the email that the 16 others had each been sent a copy.

The email in question sent by the Named Employee was in reply to an email sent to her by the acting supervisor the previous day. The initial email from the acting supervisor was a summary of an earlier verbal conversation between the two regarding certain performance issues of the Named Employee noted by the acting supervisor. In her reply to the acting supervisor, the Named Employee responded to the performance issues raised in the acting supervisor’s email. The last paragraph of the email refers to “all the stories” being circulated about the acting supervisor’s alleged off-duty actions at a “strip club.” It was clear from the OPA investigation that this subject was not in any way related to any previous conversation the acting supervisor had with the Named Employee.

The acting supervisor became aware that a number of people in her work group, her Captain and people at SPD headquarters had somehow been given access to the email sent to her by the Named Employee. The acting supervisor reported feeling humiliated and felt the Named Employee had provided copies of the email to others as an act of retaliation against the acting supervisor. The acting supervisor also told OPA she was concerned the content of the final paragraph may have harmed her reputation at SPD.

The Named Employee told OPA she included the information about the alleged incident at the strip club in the email because she was confused about the role the acting supervisor wanted to play relative to the other parking enforcement officers. The Named Employee explained the inclusion of 19 recipients as a combination of wanting others to know what was happening to her and to gain sympathy and support from others. The Named Employee acknowledged to OPA that the combination of the content of the final paragraph of the email and the audience she created for the email may have been “a little disrespectful.”

There was no dispute about the author (Named Employee), content, or number of recipients of the email. The content of the final paragraph of the email had no connection to the subject of the email, the performance issues the acting supervisor had addressed with the Named Employee. There was no legitimate business purpose for the inclusion of that content or the inclusion of many of the listed recipients. The content of the final paragraph distributed as it was to so many people in a clandestine manner was objectively offensive and indefensible. It caused embarrassment and distress to the acting supervisor. It was potentially defamatory and threatened the reputation of both the acting supervisor and the Parking Enforcement Unit.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Named Employee #1**

#### Allegation #1

A preponderance of the evidence showed that the Named Employee violated the policy. Therefore a **Sustained** finding was issued for *Standards and Duties: Employees Shall Strive to be Professional at all Times*.

Discipline Imposed: 15 Day Suspension

*NOTE: The Seattle Police Department Manual policies cited for the allegation(s) made for this OPA Investigation are policies that were in effect during the time of the incident. The issued date of the policy is listed.*