



# City of Beaufort, South Carolina

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August 2, 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

On August 1, 2024, the Beaufort Insider, a local internet blog listing Carrie Chapell as its Editor, published a story on their blog site, [www.beaufortinsider.org](http://www.beaufortinsider.org), titled “Beaufort Police Department Chief Threatens Top Officers with a Polygraph.” Several allegations leveled against Police Chief Stephenie Price and the Beaufort Police Department were presented in the article as facts. These allegations included:

- then Deputy Chief Price called nine top-ranking officers into a room in January 2023 and threatened to put them on a polygraph machine and make them all targets of investigation; and
- that “thousand of pieces of evidence from the Beaufort PD’s storage had apparently been thrown away without proper documentation;” and
- that someone with inside knowledge of the alleged missing evidence leaked the story to the Beaufort Gazette; and
- that “Price’s goal was to plug the leak through intimidation.”

This story was preceded by a series of emails from Carrie Chapell on July 31 to Beaufort’s Communications Manager, Kathleen Williams. In the first email, Chappell included the following questions:

1. Is there a procedure city employees are required to follow before speaking with the press?
2. Is there a policy for polygraphing employees? Is it standard practice to polygraph employees?
3. What is the City Manager’s procedure when an employee termination is recommended by a department head?
4. What are the city and/or police procedures for requesting a third party conduct an internal investigation?
5. Is it standard procedure to terminate someone based on claims that were referred to SLED without having waiting for SLED feedback on those claims?
6. What circumstances does the cities HIR department consider grievable?
7. Would Scott Marshall, Ivette Burgess or Stephenie Price like to comment about the disciplinary action and ultimate termination of Stephanie Fritz AKA Stephanie Karafa?

Williams attempted to arrange a meeting with Chappell for Chief Price, Ivette Burgess and I to answer the questions she posed. In one of the emails, Chappell wrote that she would publish her story before we met with her. Williams advised her that it may be more professional to wait until she had both sides of a story. However, Chappell insisted, writing on August 1 at 10:56 am that “I feel confident that you and Scott don’t want me to publish this article at all – no matter the timeline. The first article will be published today. This will be the first in a series. I am available to meet today at 3:30 if Scott wants to meet before I publish.” Williams phoned Chappell after receiving this email and told her that was an outrageous claim to make.

The allegations made in the Beaufort Insider story are categorically false. Deputy Chief Price did not assemble police officers in a room in January 23, or any other time, and threaten them with a polygraph examination.

The allegation that “Price’s goal was to plug the leak through intimidation” is patently false but is presented as fact in the story. This is not journalism. These are the actions of a writer whose words are reckless, irresponsible and inflammatory.

The allegation that thousands of pieces of evidence were improperly discarded without proper documentation is an old, unsubstantiated allegation, and was embellished in the Beaufort Insider Story. On March 24, 2023, Lieutenant Charles Raley of the Investigations Division notified Police Chief Dale McDorman that there were 849 pieces of evidence that he could not account for by inventory or through a check of records. Subsequent internal investigation as well as a SLED investigation revealed that all evidence was properly accounted for.

Within minutes of the Beaufort Insider story being published, Graham Trask posted a link to the story on the social media platform, NextDoor. His preamble to the link said, “City of Beaufort employees threatened with lie detector tests; evidence disposed of which jeopardized prosecution of a rape case; thousands of other pieces of evidence thrown out without proper documentation.” These words parroted the allegations levied in the Beaufort Insider story and were presented as facts by Trask.

The actions of the Beaufort Insider and of Graham Trask are thinly veiled attempts at professional character assassination and are intended to erode the public’s confidence in a very professional, very capable police department. The allegations have no basis in fact or reality. They are inexcusable, reprehensible and leave both parties subject to liability.

Scott M. Marshall  
City Manager