

Stavn, Stephanie

From: Derek Wallace <derek.wallace4@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2024 12:44 AM
To: Andrae, Richelle; Kigeya, April; Collins, Aaron; Gray, Anthony; Peterson, David; Weigand, Jeff; Rose, Rick
Cc: Kuhn, Jamie; Miles, Patrick; Stavn, Stephanie
Subject: PP&J June 25, 2024 - Rachel Davis Statement
Attachments: Rachel Davis.docx

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This message came from outside your organization.

Chair Andrae, Vice Chair Kigeya and Members of the Public Protection and Judiciary Committee,

Please find attached another written statement from Communicator Rachel Davis. Please note this communication includes graphic/explicit details regarding some traumatic situations and scenarios that Rachel has helped residents through as a Communicator. While these sorts of traumatic incidents are par for the course for this profession, Rachel powerfully describes the added trauma caused by the volatility and disruptiveness of this mid-year shift pick on both herself and her colleagues. In a profession already exposed to so much trauma, we respectfully ask for your support of the emotional wellbeing of our dedicated Communications.

In particular, we draw attention to Rachel's closing remarks:

We do not need to be thanked for what we do. However, we should not be put down and feel like we are less than nothing. We should not be told we are replaceable. We are not bodies in seats. We are humans with hearts. We care about your loved ones when they call for help. When it is their worst day, we are the ones that are there. Just because we are not seen, does not mean we shouldn't be heard. Please don't let us be forgotten.

Sincerely,

Derek Wallace
President, EGR 720

P.S. Please kindly attach this email and attachment to the minutes for the June 25 PP&J meeting.

To whom it should concern,

My name is Rachel Davis. I have worked at Dane County 911 since February 2013. I did not set out in life to be a 911 operator, but once I became one, I knew it was the job I was meant to do. I truly enjoyed every aspect of my job. I looked forward to coming to work every day. My coworkers and I enjoyed each other's company, the calls were always different, and I was helping people. I knew coming into this job that it was a thankless one; that was ok with me. My coworkers and I hype each other up. We debrief each other after difficult calls. Leaning on each other is how we get through the good times and the bad. As of late, there has been a lot of leaning. I would say too much. Some people have fallen down. They can't take the stress. The worst part of it is it's been brought on by people that are supposed to support us. They are supposed to lead us. People we are supposed to go to for guidance. These are all things we have never received from our current management system. We do not get support. There is no guidance. If we ask for clarification on things, most of the time there is no response. Accountability does not exist for them. We are given expectations and expected to meet them. If we do not, there is discipline. When they do not meet expectations or follow through, there are no consequences. One example of this is our in-services we are scheduled for on our off days. We are expected to give up our very limited free time with our families. We were given two weeks notice that we would be having in-service in the spring. It was then canceled within days of the in-service. There is no regard to our lives outside of this department when it comes to planning and scheduling. The mid-year shift pick is yet another huge example of that. We were given just a few weeks notice that we would be having our lives completely uprooted with a shift pick. Then, once the pick was done, we were given a mere ten days to adjust our lives before the new schedule was put into place. The stress and anxiety this has caused is unsurmountable. I have been told time and time again that the reason behind this shift pick is because of a staffing crisis. What I fail to understand is how changing shifts is going to bring more staff. We still do not have enough people. This is actually causing an adverse effect. More people are looking to leave the department. People do not want to work for this current management. Veteran staff are leaving. This is an issue. We need the knowledge and training skills to pass on to newer employees. Newer staff are looking to leave as well. The time and money spent on training them was a waste. They are seeing what it is truly like to work in this department, and they are wanting out. This is not how it should be. This was never how it used to be. It is no longer something to look forward to coming to work at night. The morale has never been as low as it is right now. The people here are broken. The people here are hurting.

Within the first few months of being signed off of training, I answered the phone for a man who had collapsed on a golf course. He was not breathing. I talked someone through CPR, and that man lived. He went home to his family. There was another time when a wife called because she heard a thud from the other room. Her husband had collapsed and stopped breathing. I talked her through CPR, and her husband lived. A fifteen year old kid called me because his mentally ill neighbor had his mother at gunpoint. I stayed on the line with this kid while he watched his neighbor shoot his mother. I talked him through bleeding instructions trying to save his mother's life. He listened to his mother repeat over and over, "I'm going to die". His four year old nephew was right next to him. She didn't make it, and I knew she wasn't going to make it, but I was not going to let him be alone in that moment. I will never forget their names. That date is ingrained in my memory forever.

If we continue to hemorrhage staff, who will answer these calls? If we continue to abuse the staff that chooses to stay, how much longer will they be willing to stay?

I have sacrificed my time away from my family for years. I earned my seniority, and I was finally on a shift where I could do what I love and spend time with my family. That was ripped away from me with almost no notice. Our year was planned out. I had every other weekend off. My family and I had things planned every one of those weekends. I now am unable to spend any of that time with them, and they are completely crushed. The kids do not understand it. They don't understand why it is happening, and I don't know what to tell them anymore. I don't have an answer. The changes that were made are not going to help the staffing levels. They are going to make things worse. People will call in sick more when they cannot get the time off they need. People will be overworked still. People are burnt out. There will still be massive amounts of overtime.

I no longer enjoy coming to work. It has become a dark part of my life. This breaks my heart. I absolutely love my job. I do not love the way we are being treated. I do not like the way my coworkers are made to feel unwanted and unappreciated. We do not need to be thanked for what we do. However, we should not be put down and feel like we are less than nothing. We should not be told we are replaceable. We are not bodies in seats. We are humans with hearts. We care about your loved ones when they call for help. When it is their worst day, we are the ones that are there. Just because we are not seen, does not mean we shouldn't be heard. Please don't let us be forgotten.

A voice in the darkness,

Rachel Davis