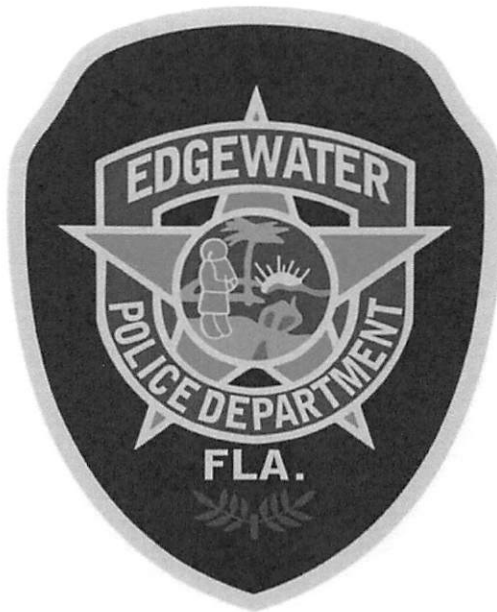


EDGEWATER POLICE DEPARTMENT



INTERNAL AFFAIRS INVESTIGATION

PREPARED BY: Sergeant Aaron Soltz

**CASE NUMBER: 1710-004
COMPLETION DATE: 12/15/2017**



EDGEWATER POLICE DEPARTMENT

“Policing For The Future Today”

135 East Park Avenue

Edgewater, FL 32132-0100

David J. Arcieri, Chief of Police

EDGEWATER POLICE DEPARTMENT INTERNAL AFFAIRS

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

IA REPORT NUMBER: 1710-004

PERIOD COVERED:	September 12, 2017
DATE REPORTED:	October 11, 2017
SUBJECT(S) NAME:	Matthew Snyder and William Wetherell
COMPLAINANT:	Captain Joe Mahoney
WITNESSES:	Officer Charles Geiger, Officer Kevin Nugent and Jacob Beede
IA INVESTIGATOR:	Sergeant Aaron Soltz #658

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION

On October 11, 2017 Captain Mahoney made contact with Officer Geiger. During their contact Officer Geiger provided Captain Mahoney with screen shots of a group text message which contained inappropriate comments made by Sergeant Snyder and Officer Wetherell. The screenshots showed a date of September 12, 2017.

Captain Mahoney then made contact with Officer Nugent who also provided screenshots of the group text from September 12, 2017. Officer Nugent's screenshots were the same as was observed on Officer Geiger's phone.

Due to the egregious nature of the text messages, the incident was immediately brought to the attention of Chief David Arcieri. Officer Wetherell was on-duty at the time so Captain Mahoney immediately removed him from his patrol duties and met with him in Chief Arcieri's office. When Officer Wetherell was made aware of the allegations, he requested to resign, but wanted to speak with his wife first. During his conversation with his wife in front of Chief Arcieri and Captain Mahoney, Wetherell stated, "I fucked up, I lost my job." Wetherell further stated he had sent a text about, "niglets." Wetherell disconnected from his wife and explained to Chief Arcieri he wasn't going to deny sending the text messages and added it was a lapse in judgement.

Captain Mahoney then requested Sergeant Snyder, who was off-duty on FMLA at the time, to respond to the police department. Sergeant Snyder admitted to sending the text messages and explained he was not a racist. Sergeant Snyder stated they were meant as a joke. Sergeant Snyder requested to resign immediately.

OFFENSE(S)

Captain Mahoney directed Sergeant Soltz to conduct an internal investigation in regards to the incident. Matthew Snyder and William Wetherell were the subject officers for the alleged violations of Departmental Policy and Procedure Directives as follows:

Edgewater Police Department Policy and Procedure Directives, # 1-4-17 "Code of Conduct" titled "Professional Conduct" Section # 1.4.53 - No employee of the department shall engage in conduct on or off duty which affects the morale or efficiency of the department, or in the alternative, engage in conduct on or off duty that has a tendency to destroy public respect for the employee and/or the department and/or destroy confidence in the operation of the department.

Edgewater Police Department Policy and Procedure Directives, # 1-4-17 "Code of Conduct" titled "Professional Conduct" Section # 1.4.60 - Derogatory Ethnic Remarks - Employees shall not make derogatory remarks concerning race, sex, religion, age or national origin of any person.

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY

On December 12, 2017, Sergeant Soltz reviewed the printout of the group text messages identified as being provided to Captain Mahoney by Officer Geiger. The printout contained both standard text messages and memes. Memes are messages with pictures, typically containing statements of a condescending nature.

In the messages dated September 12th, Sergeant Soltz observed four different employees names associated with them. Each message had a name on top of it and one or two letters to the left of it for identification purposes. They were as follows: "Beede - B" "Sergeant Snyder - SS" "Tyler Wetherell - TW" and "Kev Nugent - KN"

Text messages or memes pertinent to this investigation were as follows in chronological order: Snyder - meme - "THIS JUST IN... NO WORK BOOTS WERE STOLEN IN THE LOOTING." Wetherell - text - "Because black people don't steal things for work." Snyder - text - "That's how you starve them. Hid [*Sic*] their paycheck under their work boots." Wetherell - text - "That makes perfect sense." Snyder - text - "Yup."

Officer Nugent texted a photograph of a rifle indicating he had just purchased it. Nugent - photograph and text - "Pulled the trigger on a new rifle." Snyder - meme - The meme depicts individuals looting a store. The words on the meme state, "BLACK LOOTERS MATTER." Snyder then asks if the rifle is a .308 and Officer Nugent responds in the affirmative. Officer Nugent sent a picture of the ammunition for the rifle. Officer Nugent's comments did not appear to be a part of the inappropriate texts.

The messages go on further: Snyder - text - "had a nice one up north sold it though nothing big enough here to shoot with it other than blacks." Snyder - text - ".243 is good for picking off the little ones." Snyder - text - "Although the 7mm will ruin your day." Nugent - text - "Yeah I've got my 44 mag and 223 for other stuff." Wetherell - text - "Ur right. Can't forget about the niglits." Snyder - text - "It's better when you hit em and watch then twitch for a mi it's [*Sic*]" Wetherell - text - "I'm good with that."

On September 14th Snyder sent a meme depicting the character Al Bundy from the show, Married with Children. The meme stated, "THE JOKE'S ON THE LOOTERS. ON MY WAY OUT OF THE SHOE STORE... I PUT WORK BOOTS IN ALL THE AIR JORDAN BOXES!"

There were no further pertinent text messages or memes observed. A review of Officer Nugent's text messages revealed an identical group text thread as Officer Geiger's.

NOTIFICATION

On October 17, 2017, Sergeant Soltz contacted Snyder in person at the Edgewater Police Department. Snyder had already resigned and was returning equipment. Sergeant Soltz advised Snyder of the pending investigation against him. Sergeant Soltz provided Snyder the "Notification of Internal Investigation Memorandum," which he initialed and stated he understood the guidelines of the notification. Snyder declined a copy of the document.

On November 20, 2017, Sergeant Soltz directed Records Clerk Tracy Carpenter to send Wetherell the "Notification of Internal Investigation Memorandum" via certified mail. The certified mail was accepted and signed for by [REDACTED] Wetherell's wife, on November 27, 2017.

BODY CAMERA FOOTAGE

There is no body camera footage relevant to this investigation.

INTERVIEWS

Witness Officer Kevin Nugent:

Sergeant Soltz made contact with Officer Kevin Nugent on December 12, 2017 at the Edgewater Police Department, located at 135 East Park Avenue, Edgewater, FL 32132.

Sergeant Soltz previously explained and provided Officer Nugent with a, "Notice of Internal Investigation" form on October 17, 2017. Just prior to this interview, Sergeant Soltz issued Officer Nugent a, "Receipt and Processing of Complaints" form. Officer Nugent was given the opportunity to review both forms and indicated he had no questions. Officer Nugent signed the form and returned it to Sergeant Soltz.

Sergeant Soltz obtained a sworn, recorded statement from Officer Nugent. The following is a summary of the findings:

- Officer Nugent indicated he was part of the above group text.
- Officer Nugent stated on or about October 11th, he had a conversation with Captain Mahoney.
- Officer Nugent said the conversation with Captain Mahoney consisted of what the context of the text messages were.
- Officer Nugent advised Sergeant Soltz he provided Captain Mahoney with screenshots of the group text message.
- Sergeant Soltz provided Officer Nugent with screenshots of the group text messages he received from Captain Mahoney. Officer Nugent confirmed the messages in Sergeant Soltz' possession were the same that he provided to Captain Mahoney.
- Officer Nugent identified the following letters next to the text messages as belonging to these officers: S – Sergeant Snyder, TW – Tyler Wetherell, JB – Jacob Beede and CG – Chas Geiger.
- Sergeant Soltz began to read through the text messages and the memes. *Redacted* Officer Nugent confirmed the inappropriate texts and memes that were covered in that section were sent by either Sergeant Snyder or Officer Wetherell.
- When asked about the photograph of the rifle, Officer Nugent stated he sent that to the group to show them he had purchased a new firearm. Officer Nugent said this was sent several hours after inappropriate texts were sent and he explained it wasn't in relation to those texts.

- Furthermore, Officer Nugent went on to confirm the remainder of the inappropriate texts and memes sent to the group were sent by either Sergeant Snyder or Officer Wetherell.
- There was no further communication in the group text by Officer Nugent.
- When asked what he thought Sergeant Snyder's text stating, "had a nice one up north sold it though nothing big enough here to shoot with it other than blacks." meant, he advised Sergeant Soltz he thought he was talking about shooting bears.
- Officer Nugent admitted looking back on the text messages now, he believed they were inappropriate.

Witness Officer Charles Geiger:

Sergeant Soltz made contact with Officer Charles Geiger on December 12, 2017 at the Edgewater Police Department, located at 135 East Park Avenue, Edgewater, FL 32132.

Sergeant Soltz previously explained and provided Officer Geiger with a, "Notice of Internal Investigation" form on October 17, 2017. Just prior to this interview, Sergeant Soltz issued Officer Geiger a, "Receipt and Processing of Complaints" form. Officer Geiger was given the opportunity to review both forms and indicated he had no questions. Officer Geiger signed the form and returned it to Sergeant Soltz.

Sergeant Soltz obtained a sworn, recorded statement from Officer Geiger. The following is a summary of the findings:

- Officer Geiger stated Captain Mahoney was notified by Beede of possible inappropriate texts being sent by Edgewater officers in a group text. Officer Geiger stated he was in the group text and was requested by Captain Mahoney to speak with him about it.
- Officer Geiger advised the officers in the group text were Sergeant Snyder, Officer Wetherell, Officer Beede, Officer Nugent and himself.
- Officer Geiger printed out the group texts in question and provided them to Captain Mahoney.
- Sergeant Soltz provided Officer Geiger with screenshots of the group text messages he received from Captain Mahoney. Officer Geiger confirmed the messages in Sergeant Soltz' possession were the same that he provided to Captain Mahoney.
- Officer Geiger identifies the following letters next to the text messages as belonging to these officers: B – Beede, SS – Sergeant Snyder, TW – Tyler Wetherell, KN – Kevin Nugent.
- Officer Geiger stated the texts in questions began on September 12th.
- Officer Geiger stated he did not text the group during this time.
- Officer Geiger stated he did not delete any of his text messages and what Sergeant Soltz had was all original.
- Sergeant Soltz began to read through the text messages and the memes. *Officer Geiger confirmed the inappropriate texts and memes that were covered in that section were sent by either Sergeant Snyder or Officer Wetherell.*
- When asked about the photograph of the rifle, Officer Geiger stated it wasn't meant to be derogatory in any way. Officer Geiger stated Officer Nugent had been planning on purchasing a new rifle for several days. Officer Geiger said he believed Officer Nugent sent the picture in this thread as it was an easy way to show everyone on his shift he had purchased a new firearm.
- Geiger stated he took the messages between Snyder and Wetherell to be derogatory, racist comments, embarrassing to the department.

FINDING OF FACT

1. Policy violation 1-4-17 “Code of Conduct” titled “Professional Conduct” Section # 1.4.53:

Based on the evidence obtained; as well as sworn statements provided by witnesses, Sergeant Soltz was able to determine Snyder and Wetherell engaged in conduct, which affected the morale and efficiency of the department. They also engaged in conduct that destroyed public respect for the department, as well as destroyed the confidence in the operation of the department. The following supports a violation of this directive:

- Both Snyder and Wetherell admitted to sending text messages and memes, which were of a derogatory and racist nature.
- In addition to the admissions, Officer Nugent and Officer Geiger both provided sworn statements, indicating they witnessed the text messages and memes that were sent by Snyder and Wetherell.

2. Policy violation 1-4-17 “Code of Conduct” titled “Professional Conduct” Section # 1.4.60 - Derogatory Ethnic Remarks:

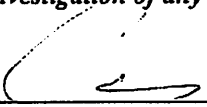
Based on the evidence obtained; as well as sworn statements provided by witnesses, Sergeant Soltz was able to determine Snyder and Wetherell Employees made derogatory remarks concerning race. The following supports a violation of this directive:

- Both Snyder and Wetherell admitted to sending text messages and memes, which were of a derogatory and racist nature.
- In addition to the admissions, Officer Nugent and Officer Geiger both provided sworn statements, indicating they witnessed the text messages and memes that were sent by Snyder and Wetherell.


CONCLUSION

Edgewater Police Department Policy and Procedure Directives, # 1-4-17 "Code of Conduct" titled "Professional Conduct" Section # 1.4.53	<i>SUSTAINED</i>
Edgewater Police Department Policy and Procedure Directives, # 1-4-17 "Code of Conduct" titled "Professional Conduct" Section # 1.4.60 - Derogatory Ethnic Remarks	<i>SUSTAINED</i>

"I, the undersigned, do hereby swear, under penalty of perjury, that, to the best of my personal knowledge, information, and belief, I have not knowingly or willfully deprived, or allowed another to deprive, the subject of the investigation of any of the rights contained in F.S.S. 112.532 and 112.533."

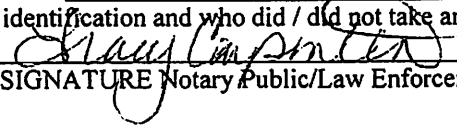


Sergeant Aaron Soltz



Chief David Arcieri

The forgoing instrument was acknowledged before me on this 21st day
of December 20 17
By the Affiant who is personally known to me or has
produced _____

As identification and who did / did not take an oath.


SIGNATURE Notary Public/Law Enforcement

