

**VOLUSIA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**REPORT OF INVESTIGATION**

**REPORT NUMBER: IA-17-008**

**PERIOD COVERED:** December 2016-January 2017

**DATE REPORTED:** March 02, 2017

**SUBJECT(S) NAME:** Detective Roy Galarza #1671

**INVESTIGATING OFFICERS:** Detective Glen Bennett #1452  
Detective Tara Burke #1465

**BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:**

On March 02, 2017, Sheriff's Office command staff received an email from Rhonda Love Dixon in reference to Detective Roy Galarza allegedly having an inappropriate relationship with her niece, Lillian Marie Hodge. Furthermore, the email outlined that Detective Galarza was involved in a criminal investigation concerning Ms. Hodge.

**OFFENSES:**

This investigation is relevant to an alleged violation of Department Standards Directives and Volusia County Merit Rules and Regulations:

**26.2.68 Interference in Official Investigation** - Employees shall not interfere with cases being processed by other Deputies or other governmental agencies, nor undertake any investigation or other official action not part of their regular duties unless ordered to do so by a superior, unless the intervening Deputy reasonably believes that failure to act would result in an injustice, or the exigencies of the situation require immediate action. Such action will be immediately reported to a superior. *(Violation subject up to a 5 day suspension.)*

**Volusia County Merit System Rules and Regulations 86-453.** *This violation may be sufficient grounds for disciplinary action ranging from oral reprimand to dismissal, depending on the seriousness of the offense and other circumstances related to the situation.*

**RE:** (13) Any conduct, on or off duty that reflects unfavorably on the County as an Employer.

**INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY:**

On March 2, 2017, Chief Deputy John Creamer assigned the above incident to the Internal Affairs Unit to gather further facts related to the allegations. This report details the internal affairs investigation conducted by both Detective Bennett and Detective Burke.

March 2, 2017, an email was sent to Volusia County Sheriff's office by Rhonda Love Dixon. According to the email, Ms. Dixon alleged that her niece, Lillian Marie Hodge, and Detective Galarza had a prior personal relationship. Upon receiving this information it was turned over to the Internal Affairs Unit to investigate further.

Deputy Omelia was conducting a fraud investigation, VCSO case # 16-32065. It was reported by the victim, Mr. Anthony Lombardi, that checks were stolen from the fernery by William Clifford Robinson; Mr. Robinson purchased the fernery from Mr. Lombardi. It was found that Mr. Robinson was in a personal relationship with Ms. Hodge. Deputy Omelia asked Detective Galarza for assistance with the fraud investigation.

**Rhonda Love Dixon**

On March 3, 2017, Detective Bennett and Sergeant Sawicki conducted a sworn recorded interview with Rhonda Love Dixon at 329 Bennett Road in Pierson, FL. The following is a summary of that interview:

According to Ms. Dixon, her niece, Lillian Marie Hodge, stopped by her residence around March of 2017 and informed her she was going to tell Detective Galarza's wife of a past personal relationship between the two, if he continued to investigate her and her boyfriend, William Clifford Robinson. At the time, both Ms. Hodge and Mr. Robinson were being questioned on a case involving stolen checks. Ms. Dixon believed that Ms. Hodge was attempting to leverage her past relationship with Detective Galarza in order to stay out of trouble. Ms. Dixon put this information, along with other information involving Ms. Hodge and Mr. Robinson into an email and sent it to Sheriff's Office command staff.

Ms. Hodge and Mr. Robinson had been interviewed by a couple deputies including Detective Galarza. At the time, Ms. Dixon was unaware of any relationship between Ms. Hodge and Detective Galarza. Ms. Dixon recalled hearing about a possible relationship from family and friends but that was that several years ago. Ms. Dixon never saw Ms. Hodge and Detective Galarza together nor did she provide any physical evidence to support Ms. Hodge's story; however, she did provide a possible witness that may have seen Detective Galarza and Ms. Hodge together when he was on duty several years ago. *(See Tab D – for Official Transcript)*

### **Lillian Marie Hodge**

On March 9, 2017, Detective Bennett and Detective Burke conducted a sworn recorded interview with Lillian Marie Hodge in Pierson. The following is a summary of that interview:

According to Ms. Hodge, she was never in a personal relationship with Detective Galarza, she advised that they went to middle school and high school together and she graduated with his sibling. Ms. Hodge denied having any preferential treatment based on a friendship or acquaintance with Detective Galarza.

Furthermore, Ms. Hodge did advise that Detective Galarza came to her house with another deputy approximately three weeks prior questioning her about a case involving Mr. Robinson. She told the deputies not to come back to the house. Ms. Hodge stated she had *“No special treatment.”* *(See Tab E – for Official Transcript)*

On March 9, 2017, Detective Bennett spoke with Scott Wells via telephone. Mr. Wells acknowledged knowing Ms. Hodge, but denied knowing Detective Galarza; he denied knowing of any relationship between the two of them.

## **Deputy Patrick Omelia**

On March 10, 2017, Detective Bennett and Detective Burke conducted a sworn recorded interview with Deputy Patrick Omelia at the Sheriff's administrative offices in Deland, FL. The following is a summary of that interview:

Deputy Omelia has served with the Sheriff's Office for just less than three years, and has been assigned to District-2 law enforcement patrol in Pierson for the past sixteen months.

According to Deputy Omelia, he was first made aware of case #16-32065 when Mr. Lombardi informed him that he was having fraud issues with some checks; this was further investigated by Deputy Omelia.

Detective Galarza assisted Deputy Omelia with the fraud investigation at the request of Deputy Omelia. During the investigation Deputy Omelia had suspicion that Detective Galarza was not assisting him as he should, he felt that something was unusual with the investigation. Deputy Omelia explained he felt this way due to an email he received from Detective Galarza about the case, and also because of the interviews they conducted together with Ms. Hodge and Mr. Robinson.

Detective Galarza made him feel "*uncomfortable*" when they were interviewing Ms. Hodge. Deputy Omelia explained that Detective Galarza felt Ms. Hodge was getting frustrated with him during the interview and Detective Galarza requested to speak to Ms. Hodge alone. After the conversation between Detective Galarza and Ms. Hodge, he told Deputy Omelia that Ms. Hodge had nothing further to add, that he was rude to Ms. Hodge, and he may not want to speak to her again.

Detective Galarza also went with Deputy Omelia to interview Mr. Robinson. Deputy Omelia explained that after they talked to Mr. Robinson he walked back to his vehicle and Detective Galarza stayed and had a brief conversation with Mr. Robinson. Detective Galarza returned and told Deputy Omelia he had nothing further. Deputy Omelia explained he felt something was

unusual and questioned whether Deputy Galarza's family may work in the fernery and their employment could be affected if Mr. Robinson was arrested.

Deputy Omelia advised he never had any prior cases with Ms. Hodge or Mr. Robinson, but has had prior calls for service with Ms. Dixon. *(See Tab F – for Official Transcript)*

On March 10, 2017, Chief Deputy John Creamer assigned the above incident to the Internal Affairs Unit and Detective Galarza was served with a Notification of Internal Investigation along with a copy of his Officer Bill of Rights.

On March 22, 2017, Detective Burke spoke with the State Attorney's Office, who advised that no one contacted their office in reference to the fraud case to provide or obtain information, or to give any further input.

On March 22, 2017, Detective Burke spoke with Anthony Lombardi via telephone. Mr. Lombardi could not recall contacting the Sheriff's Office in January; he advised he's been in contact with Deputy Omelia about the case. Mr. Lombardi advised that the store owner, Bipin Talati, may have called the office trying to obtain information; he provided a telephone number for Mr. Talati.

On March 22, 2017, Detective Bennett spoke with Mr. Talati via telephone; he advised that he may have contacted the Sheriff's Office in January to get information about the case, but was unaware of who he spoke with.

### **Roy Galarza**

On March 27, 2017, Investigator Bennett and Detective Burke conducted a sworn recorded interview with Detective Roy Galarza at the Sheriff's administrative offices in Deland, FL. Present on Detective Galarza's behalf was Nancye Jones and Brodie Hughes. The following is a summary of that interview:

According to Detective Galarza, Deputy Omelia has asked him to help him with cases in the past and he has helped him. Detective Galarza recalled the fraud case #16-32065; he advised that Deputy Omelia requested assistance. Detective Galarza went with Deputy Omelia to interview Ms. Hodge; he explained he knows Ms. Hodge because his siblings went to the same school as her. Detective Galarza denied having a personal relationship with Ms. Hodge. Detective Galarza explained that during the interview with Ms. Hodge he questioned her as well. Detective Galarza advised after the interview Ms. Hodge signaled him to come back to speak with her. Ms. Hodge told him that Deputy Omelia was rude to her and had been harassing her due to previous incidents. After the conversation with Ms. Hodge, Detective Galarza informed Deputy Omelia that Ms. Hodge said he was rude to her and for him not to come back. Detective Galarza advised that he was working patrol on this day so he did not have his digital recorder with him during the interview, but he informed Deputy Omelia to record the interview with his BWC.

Detective Galarza advised his sister received a message on Facebook from Ms. Hodge requesting a telephone number for Detective Galarza, his sister did not respond to the message. Detective Galarza denied any other contact with Ms. Hodge in reference to this case.

He explained that the email he sent to Deputy Omelia inquiring about the fraud case was because an acquaintance, Claire Burnsed, asked him who was handling the case with Mr. Lombardi. Detective Galarza believes Mr. Burnsed may work for Mr. Lombardi but he did not know for certain. Detective Galarza requested the case number, pulled up the report, and sent a message to Deputy Berriozabal and Deputy Omelia asking them to contact the victim.

According to Detective Galarza, he did not know Mr. Robinson prior to this investigation and he was unaware of a relationship between Mr. Robinson and Ms. Hodge. Detective Galarza did not know Mr. Robinson sold fern prior to this investigation; he was only aware of the fraud case that he learned about from Deputy Omelia. Detective Galarza denied working for Mr. Robinson or knowing of any family that worked for him. Detective Galarza denied that any of his family would be impacted financially if Mr. Robinson went to jail.

Detective Galarza explained Deputy Omelia's demeanor when he was questioning Mr. Robinson, he didn't feel that the interview was going well, because Mr. Robinson seemed to be getting agitated.

Detective Bennett and Detective Burke reviewed the BWC from this interview, it did appear that Deputy Omeila came across as abrupt and it appeared Mr. Robinson was getting frustrated.

Detective Galarza denied that Mr. Robinson ever asked him to dissolve his case; and he had never met Mr. Robinson or Ms. Hodge to discuss the fraud case any further. Detective Galarza denied that Ms. Hodge ever threatened to disclose a possible relationship if he didn't resolve the case against Mr. Robinson. Detective Galarza never told Deputy Omelia not to file charges on Mr. Robinson or Ms. Hodge.

Detective Galarza was asked if he violated the following policies:

**26.2.68 Interference in Official Investigation: NO**

**Volusia County Merit System Rules and Regulations 86-453 (13): NO**

*(See Tab G for Official Transcript)*

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

On March 02, 2017, Sheriff's Office command staff received an email from Rhonda Dixon in reference to Detective Roy Galarza allegedly having an inappropriate relationship with her niece, Lillian Marie Hodge. Furthermore, the email outlined that Detective Galarza was involved in a criminal investigation concerning Ms. Hodge.

Deputy Omelia was conducting a fraud investigation, VCSO case # 16-32065; Detective Galarza assisted Deputy Omelia with the fraud investigation at the request of Deputy Omelia. It was reported by the victim, Mr. Anthony Lombardi, that checks were stolen from the fernery by William Clifford Robinson; Mr. Robinson purchased the fernery from Mr. Lombardi. It was also found that Mr. Robinson was in a personal relationship with Ms. Hodge.

During the investigation Deputy Omelia had suspicion that Detective Galarza was not assisting him as he should, he felt that something was unusual with the investigation. Deputy Omelia felt this way due to an email he received from Detective Galarza involving the case, and because of interviews they conducted together with Ms. Hodge and Mr. Robinson. It was later learned in regards to the email, Detective Galarza sent an email to Deputy Omelia inquiring about the case because an acquaintance, Claire Burnsed, asked him who was handling the case with Mr. Lombardi. Detective Galarza was uncertain if Mr. Burnsed worked for Mr. Lombardi but he requested the case number, pulled up the report, and sent a message to Deputy Berriozabal and Deputy Omelia with a request for them to contact the victim.

Deputy Omelia also said he felt “*uncomfortable*” when he and Detective Galarza were interviewing Ms. Hodge. During this interview with Ms. Hodge, Detective Galarza felt that she was getting frustrated with Deputy Omelia so Detective Galarza requested to speak to her alone. After the conversation between Detective Galarza and Ms. Hodge, he told Deputy Omelia that Ms. Hodge had nothing further to add, that he was rude to her, and he may not want to speak to her again. During his interview with Internal Affairs, Detective Galarza confirmed Ms. Hodge told him Deputy Omelia was rude to her and had been harassing her due to previous incidents.

Detective Galarza also assisted Deputy Omelia with an interview of Mr. Robinson. After they spoke to Mr. Robinson together, Detective Galarza stayed and had a brief conversation with Mr. Robinson. After this conversation, Detective Galarza told Deputy Omelia that Mr. Robinson had nothing further. Deputy Omelia felt something was unusual and questioned whether Deputy Galarza’s family may work in the fernery and could be affected if Mr. Robinson was arrested.

During his interview with Internal Affairs, Detective Galarza denied knowing Mr. Robinson prior to this investigation and he was unaware of a relationship between Mr. Robinson and Ms. Hodge. Detective Galarza also did not know Mr. Robinson sold fern prior to this investigation; he was only aware of the fraud case that he learned about from Deputy Omelia. Detective Galarza denied working for Mr. Robinson, knowing of any family that worked for him, or that any of his family would be impacted financially if Mr. Robinson went to jail. Detective Galarza denied that Mr. Robinson ever asked him to dissolve his case, and he had never met Mr. Robinson or Ms. Hodge to discuss the fraud case any further. Detective Galarza denied that Ms. Hodge ever threatened to disclose a possible relationship if he didn’t resolve the fraud case





- F. Official Transcripts of Deputy Patrick Omelia
- G. Official Transcripts of Detective Roy Galarza
- H. Miscellaneous Documents
- I. Digital Media

**WITNESSES:**

Rhonda Love Dixon  
329 Bennett Road  
Pierson, FL  
386-749-2750

Lillian Marie Hodge  
178 Steadman Street  
Pierson, FL  
386-748-5201

Deputy Patrick Omelia  
Volusia County Sheriff's Office  
386-736-5961

Detective Roy Galarza  
Volusia County Sheriff's Office  
386-736-5961

I, the undersigned, do hereby swear, under the 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 suspect of the investigation of any rights contained in ss. 112.532 and 112.533, Florida Statutes.

DETECTIVE:  DATE: 07/13/17

**Detective Tara Burke  
Internal Affairs Investigator**

APPROVED BY:  DATE: 07/14/17

**Chief Deputy John Creamer  
SHERIFF MICHAEL J. CHITWOOD  
VOLUSIA COUNTY FLORIDA**