Volusia County
FLORIDA

Department of Public Protection

TO: Randa Matusiak, Director
Public Protection

FROM: Brian Smothers, Captain
Internal Affairs Investigation Unit

DATE: February 19, 2025

SUBJECT: Supervisory Inquiry

On January 29, 2025, and January 30, 2025, I, Captain Smothers was informed by the Public Protection Director Randa Matusiak that I would be investigating a potential mishandling of confidential information at the Animal Control Division located at 1250 Indian Lake Rd. Daytona Beach. I conducted three interviews including Angela Miedema (Director), Jennifer Meister (Field Supervisor) and Shari Williams (Office Manager). Below is a synopsis of those interviews.

Angela Miedema

On January 29, 2025, at 1604 hours, a sworn, recorded interview was conducted at the Animal Control Services Division with Angela Miedema, the division director. The interview was led by Captain Smothers from the Volusia County Department of Corrections Internal Affairs Unit. Angela Miedema confirmed her awareness of the recording and took an oath to provide truthful statements.

Director Miedema advised that she recently discovered Shari Williams was discussing work matters with former employee Alicia Dease. Director Miedema stated this information was brought to her attention during a homicide investigation, and shared concern that confidential specifics of the case may have been discussed outside the workplace. Due to the seriousness of the allegations, Director Miedema did not question Ms. Williams, but notified Director Matusiak for direction.

Director Miedema stated earlier this date when informing Ms. Williams she was under investigation, Shari immediately responded, "*Alicia is going to eat this up.*" Miedema interpreted this as an indication that Shari had been in recent communication with Alicia regarding workplace concerns.

Ms. Miedema stated Ms. Williams was recently taking an unusual number of breaks, often more than ten per day, during which she was frequently on her phone. Miedema speculated that these breaks might have been used to share information with Ms. Dease.

Miedema confirmed that Shari and Alicia were close, particularly under the previous leadership of Sergio (previous Animal Control Director). She mentioned that Sergio and Shari had once asked Alicia to be a surrogate for them, which indicated the depth of their relationship.

Jennifer Meister

On January 29, 2025, Officer Jennifer Meister of Volusia County Animal Control was interviewed by Captain Smothers from the Volusia County Department of Corrections Internal Affairs Unit. ACO Meister confirmed her awareness of the recording and took an oath to provide truthful statements.

Ms. Meister was informed the scope of the investigation and asked if she had any knowledge of Ms. Williams sharing information with Ms. Dease regarding the current Homicide investigation.

Ms. Meister reported on January 16, 2025, while in Williams' office discussing the flood of public records request on the homicide investigation involving a dog attack, Williams told her that she had spoken to Ms. Dease. Ms. Dease reportedly asked Ms. Williams during this conversation if the department had issued a "cause for destruction" for the dogs involved. Williams reportedly told Alicia that they had only issued a "sufficient cause" to classify them as dangerous. Meister, who was only familiar with the sufficient cause document, reportedly asked what Williams meant by a "cause for destruction" form. Williams stating it should be stored somewhere on the office's shared drive but wasn't sure exactly were.

When asked if Williams and Alicia were friends, Meister said it seemed like they were because Williams had mentioned keeping in touch with Alicia even after she left the division. Meister gave an example, saying that when she (Meister) recently got promoted, Williams told her that she had already told Alicia two days earlier.

It was also asked if Williams often brought up Alicia in conversations. Meister said she had heard Alicia's name mentioned multiple times but wasn't sure if Williams talked about her to others. Meister clarified their conversation about the dog attack had taken place in Williams' office with the door open, but Meister didn't think anyone else had overheard it. She advised both Director Miedema and staff assistant Judi Wilknson, were in their respective offices but didn't think they could hear anything.

When asked if she had told anyone else about her conversation with Williams, Meister said she had mentioned it to Director Miedema the day before her field supervisor interview and briefly brought it up to Sean Riggins while driving home. She had asked Riggins if he knew anything about a "cause for destruction" form because Williams had mentioned it in relation to Alicia. Reagan had never heard of such a form.

Regarding her (Meister) relationship with Alicia, Meister said she didn't have any personal issues with her. She acknowledged that Alicia had been investigated for her management style when she was a supervisor, and working under her had been challenging, but nothing personal had carried over after Alicia left. The only time she interacted with Alicia outside of work was when they volunteered together at a Cracker Barrel charity event.

When asked if Williams had ever made a comment like, *"Alicia is going to eat this up."* Meister said she didn't recall hearing anything like that. When asked if Williams had shared any information with Alicia beyond their conversation, Meister said she didn't know but assumed if anything was shared, it was probably over the phone rather than through documents. However, she acknowledged that Williams had access to all necessary files and could have shared them if she wanted to.

Meister also mentioned that Williams had openly expressed dissatisfaction with her job and didn't seem interested in staying. When asked about their relationship, Meister described it as strictly professional. They weren't friends, but Williams was always polite to her at work.

Shari Williams

This interview was conducted as part of an internal affairs investigation regarding a conversation between Shari Williams and Jennifer Meister on January 16, 2025.

At the beginning of the interview, Shari Williams stated that she did not recall having a conversation with Jennifer Meister regarding the "confiscation for destruction" form. However, upon further questioning, she acknowledged discussing it and inquired why such a form had not been used in this case.

Shari explained that, in previous severe cases, the confiscation for destruction form had been utilized to bypass the standard dangerous dog procedures and expedite removal and destruction of the animals. She recalled informing Jennifer that this form had been used in prior situations but

denied making any recommendations regarding its use for the current case and later advised that Alica did not pressure her about the form.

When asked if she had shared confidential case details with anyone outside of her work responsibilities, Shari initially hesitated, stating she had to think about it. She later confirmed she discussed the case in general terms with her mother and aunt, both of whom are volunteers at the shelter. She confirmed speaking to Alicia Deases but stated she did not believe she shared confidential information. She admitted she and Alicia speculated about the location of the dogs but stated this was common knowledge among employees.

Shari denied sending any emails, text messages, or photographs related to the case. However, she acknowledged mentioning to Alicia that the confiscation for destruction form had not been used in this situation.

Shari confirmed that she and Alicia are friends and have maintained communication outside of work. She was specifically asked if she had shared any case-related information with Alicia in any form, including texts, emails, or verbal discussions. Shari denied sharing any confidential records but acknowledged discussing case-related topics in general conversation.

When pressed on what she considered "confidential," Shari stated she was unclear on what specifically confidential information regarding the case was considered. However, she reaffirmed that she did not believe she had disclosed anything confidential.

Shari was questioned about a comment she made to Angela, stating, "Alicia is going to eat this up." She clarified that this statement referred to Alicia finding it ironic that Shari was now undergoing an internal affairs investigation, similar to what Alicia had previously experienced before resigning.

Shari stated that only long-term employees were familiar with the confiscation for destruction process. She explained that she recently located past cases from 2013 that referenced the form and intended to share them with Jennifer Meister for informational purposes. She expressed surprise that some current supervisors were unaware of the form, stating she believed it should be common knowledge for those handling dangerous dog cases.

Shari was reminded that this is an open internal investigation and that she is prohibited from discussing the matter further with Alicia Dease or anyone else. She acknowledged understanding this directive.

Conclusion:

This investigation focused on whether Ms. Williams discussed or shared confidential information related to a recent high-profile case involving the death of an 8-year-old boy due to a dog attack. Specifically, the inquiry sought to determine if Ms. Williams improperly discussed the case, referenced a "confiscation for destruction" form, or shared privileged case details with unauthorized individuals, including former employee Alicia Dease.

Based on the interviews and facts gathered during this inquiry, I did not find any evidence that Ms. Williams shared confidential information regarding the homicide investigation outside of the workplace. Ms. Williams did admit to discussing the *"cause for destruction*" form with Ms. Dease and Ms. Meister, but only admitted to limited discussion with Ms. Dease

As a part of this investigation, Ms. Williams' work cellular phone was analyzed. During the content search of this phone, it was discovered that Ms. Williams had downloaded Facebook Messenger, connected to her private Facebook page. Inside the messages, Ms. Williams had several conversations with Alicia Dease regarding work at Volusia County Animal Control. More specific, on January 27, 2025, Ms. Williams shared with Ms. Dease the name of the promotional candidate being promoted to the position of Field Supervisor. Within that message Ms. Williams acknowledged she was the only person with that information.

At the time Ms. Williams was given the promotional information, the person being promoted was not yet informed, and Ms. Williams was given a direct order by Director Miedema to keep the information private until the promotion was publicly announced. Based on the language in the message to Ms. Dease, Ms. Williams was aware this information should not be disclosed, further evident by her statement to Ms. Meister indicating she told Ms. Dease about the promotion days before Ms. Meister knew.

On February 18, 2025, this investigation was staffed with Director Matusiak, Director Miedema, and Volusia County Human Resource Manager Jessica Paugh. This investigation is closed.

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Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have read the foregoing document and that the facts stated in it are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

(Investigator's Name)

2.19.2025
Date

STATE OF FLORIDA

COUNTY OF VOLUSIA

Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me by means of [X] physical presence or [_] online notarization, this 19th day of February 2025, by Brian Smothers

SIGNATURE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

JESSICA L DAY
Notary Public, State Of Florida
Commission No. HH 356622
My Commission Expires: 1/31/2027

PRINT ,TYPE, OR STAMP COMMISSIONED NAME OF NOTARY PUBLIC

Personally Known X OR Produced Identification ___ Type _____

APPROVED BY:

DATE: 2/19/25

DIRECTOR RANDA MATUSIAK

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