

QuartziteTown Council

June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011

My name is John Stair.

I am the vice president of the Arizona Conference of Police and Sheriffs (AZCOPS).

AZCOPS is one of the largest law enforcement associations in Arizona, with a membership of over 5,000 officers, representing 95 affiliates groups. I am proud to be here tonight to support one of those affiliate groups, the Quartzite Police Officers Association (QPOA) and their members.

I would like to preface my remarks by respectfully reminding this body that the primary purpose for the establishment of government - **is to protect the people.**

Just like you - as elected officials - the elected leaders of QPOA take seriously their duty to fervently represent their members. It is an honor and privilege and, yes, sometimes – difficult for them to serve their fellow officers, in this capacity. Tonight, none of the QPOA leaders take pleasure in bringing this matter formally to your attention.

AZCOPS is here to officially announce to the council the QPOA's "No Confidence" vote in Chief Gilbert. 10 of your town's police officers have signed a public statement that they do not believe Chief Gilbert can effective lead the Quartzite Police Department. This decision has

not been made for light or transient reasons. In fact, I can tell you a vote of “No Confidence” in a police chief is rare in Arizona. It is, however, a last ditch effort to gain the public and elected officials’ attention about the way the department is being run, but mostly, it is about the person in charge of the department.

QPOA has outlined numerous complaints regarding Chief Gilbert’s actions, along with their recommendations on how they would like the town to proceed. At the conclusion of my remarks, I would like to submit their statement to the town clerk for distribution to each of you.

I would like to take a moment to just highlight some of the issues that **AZCOPS** is most concerned about.

- 1) QPOA alleges Chief Gilbert falsified a leave request by whiting out the town manager’s signature on the request. This caused the form to appear as though the leave had not been approved, when in reality, the leave had been approved. Altering your own records, after the fact, in law enforcement is a serious error. Not to mention, altering a superior’s signature.
- 2) QPOA alleges Chief Gilbert ordered officers to make traffic stops and arrest and/or cite citizens he thought were against him or political causes he supports.

- 3) QPOA alleges Chief Gilbert disciplines officers based on their loyalty to him and not on fair and objective criteria.
- 4) QPOA alleges Chief Gilbert prevents “friends” of his from being arrested on warrant. A warrant is a command to the officer from the court to bring that person into custody. **It is not a suggestion.**
- 5) QPOA alleges Chief Gilbert used and ordered others to use the **National Crime Information Center** and the **Arizona Criminal Justice Information System** records check on political candidates and citizens supporting candidates who Chief Gilbert opposed.

These are just some of the allegation made by QPOA. They are serious allegations and if true, some are criminal.

So, where do we go from here?

AZCOPS sent a letter to AZPOST on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011 requesting that it conduct an investigation into the allegations against Chief Gilbert. It is our understanding that since HB2613 will not be in effect until July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011, AZPOST sent the letter to the city for appropriate disposition. If this matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the QPOA, AZCOPS will be resubmitting that letter to AZPOST after July 20<sup>th</sup>, and requesting a full investigation into the allegations made by QPOA.

As you can tell by the turnout this evening, public safety is an important issue to the members of your community. This is not unusual. All across this great state, citizens are telling their elected officials, public safety officers are very important to the community and they will stand with these officers who selflessly serve them. These brave men and women are, often times, the “point of the spear” in carrying out public policy. Because of this, officers are keenly aware of how power can pervert justice.

An example of this can be seen here when the town has not followed **its own policy** regarding placing someone on paid administrative leave when serious allegations have been made against them. If a patrol officer would be placed on administrative leave given the same accusations against him - to prevent him from interfering with an investigation - **how much more**, is administrative leave necessary when allegations are made against the person who could **most** interfere with an investigation?

AZCOPS believes it is wise and prudent to place Chief Gilbert on paid administrative leave so these allegations can be thoroughly and impartially investigated by DPS.

I was going to say “finally”, on a personal note, “thank you for your leadership”, but I see it’s vacant. (During this speech all council members except for Mayor Foster left the meeting).