



DOOR COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

TAMMY A. STERNARD, SHERIFF
Kyle Veese, Chief Deputy
Carl Waterstreet, Professional Standards Captain
Brad Shortreed, Patrol Lieutenant
Michael Bertrand, Jail Lieutenant

Integrity – Professionalism – Fairness – Teamwork

Date: 06/11/2026

SHERIFF TAMMY STERNARD LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

I am continuing my mission of transparency with you by sharing that I have received a document from the Door County Deputy Sheriff's Association that lays out a series of mischaracterizations and baseless allegations about me as sheriff. In fact, this document was suspiciously requested through an Open Records request before I had even personally received it, leading me to question the timing and circumstances surrounding its release. I am releasing it proactively here along with this letter to you.

I respect the right of members of the association as well as all other non-union employees to express concerns regarding the Sheriff's Office, and I take those concerns seriously. All who know me know that my door is always open for feedback and open to hearing new ideas and making changes to improve operations. It is unfortunate that some within the association chose not to come and talk to me about most of what's alleged in the document, but rather to air their grievances in this manner. I strongly believe the public deserves to know the facts regarding claims contained in the Association's resolution.

At the outset, it is my understanding that the vote on this resolution did not represent the majority of the association's full membership – and certainly not a majority of the Sheriff's office personnel. I understand many members simply chose not to participate in this vote, objecting to the potential political nature and timing of this action. It is worth mentioning that the Association represents only a portion of the entire Sheriff's Office. I also know there are many employees, both union and non-union as well as our community partners, who work closely with me every day and who see firsthand the dedication, commitment, and effort that goes into leading this office.

I also believe several issues outlined in the resolution were presented without important operational context, while other allegations were vague, generalized, or lacking specific facts and difficult to answer without the information.

- Staffing challenges within Corrections are not unique to Door County and have affected agencies across Wisconsin and the nation. But let's talk about the truth of what's happening here. Throughout these challenges, the Sheriff's Office has continued working to recruit staff, reduce overtime pressures, and maintain safe operations. I along with my leadership team have met with union leadership and members repeatedly. Many ideas and proposals intended to help reduce overtime and staffing strain were ultimately rejected by the Association through conversations or negotiations. We did agree to allow for some staffing assistance outside of the contract, but the Association leadership themselves chose to keep other bargaining unit members from helping. I argued for additional staffing, so the county added another staff position in the jail beginning in 2026, I will reiterate that the allegation of me being the problem or the fact I stood mute are completely incorrect. I did not stand still. We are constantly seeking creative solutions to staffing challenges.

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- Deputy wellness has been and will continue to be priority. The Sheriff's Office has invested in wellness programming, peer support efforts, training opportunities, and therapy dog resources, while continuing to evaluate how those programs can be strengthened and expanded. The Association's insinuation there is no therapy dog programming and its why individuals don't participate in wellness initiatives is untrue. The Wellness Team meets regularly and the issue of how to get others involved is often discussed. The dog ("Finn") was donated, and once he was old enough, he began his therapy dog yearlong training. During that time, Finn was at the department every day his handler was working. Due to a change in primary handler and other behavioral issues with the dog we cannot and may not deploy it in the manner we originally intended. He is available for certain activities the handler feels would be appropriate at this time. But we're getting there and we expect to finalize the revamped program in the coming months. For Finn's wellbeing, we want to ensure the program and policy are implemented thoughtfully and appropriately based on where he is at.
- Major operational decisions, including critical incidents, are addressed through established command structures involving both union and non-union supervisors, command staff, and partner agencies. Decisions are made based on the facts known at the time, these are often very fluid situations and always made with public and officer safety in mind. Simply stated, I trust the people who are highly trained and responding and then reporting to me or other command staff so an appropriate response and resources are utilized.
- Public communication decisions are made carefully and responsibly, balancing transparency with investigative, legal, personnel and victim considerations - as well as legitimate privacy, safety, and family considerations raised by those involved. The core values of Integrity, Professionalism, Fairness, and Teamwork were developed collectively within this office and are responsibilities shared by every member of this agency, including me. It is something we should all be working on daily to improve and help make us stronger.

Apart from the issue of jail staffing, the Association has not approached me on any of these concerns that I can recall over the nearly 8 years I have been Sheriff. This is troubling because Association leadership and I have always had open and honest conversations regarding issues they may have had. To imply they couldn't talk to me because I'm the Sheriff is not only unfair, it is untrue. Communication is a two-way street; we all can do better.

Having previously served in Association leadership myself, I understand the importance of listening to staff concerns and maintaining open communication. I have always made myself available to employees and Association leadership, and I remain committed to doing so. That has not changed. Demands put on the elected office of sheriff are many, and my Chief Deputy and I work closely together to ensure the responsibilities of this office are handled effectively and professionally.

At the same time, the Sheriff has a responsibility not only to employees, but also to the citizens and taxpayers of Door County. My focus remains on supporting the dedicated men and women of this office, maintaining public safety, and continuing to move this agency forward professionally and responsibly.

I have dedicated my life to this profession and to serving the people of Door County. That service has included difficult decisions, long hours, personal sacrifice, and standing up for this office during some very challenging times. I am not perfect, and there are always areas where we can improve, but I will not apologize for leading with honesty, compassion and integrity.

These are public attacks on my character and an attempt to portray me in a way that is inconsistent with my actions and record as Sheriff. This has been personally hurtful, but one of my strengths is to stand tall, riding out the storm and remain focused on my responsibilities as sheriff. I remain committed the same today as it was yesterday: to serve the people of Door County and support the professionals who put on this uniform every day. Leadership is not always about making popular decisions. Sometimes it means making difficult ones. I have always tried to do that honestly and with the best interests of this office and this community in mind.

In closing, as many in the community know, my mother has passed away this week and my family is focusing on laying my mother to rest. My focus right now is on my family and continuing to serve the people of Door County during a very difficult personal time. I do not intend to engage in further public debate regarding these matters at this time.

Sheriff Tammy