

Lawrence, Kansas Police Department
Media Release
Update and Statement
February 24, 2012

In May of 2011, the Lawrence Police Department received an anonymous complaint alleging Lawrence Police Officers were involved with fixing tickets in exchange for Kansas University Athletic Event tickets. The Lawrence Police Department initiated a personnel investigation of the allegations immediately. In July, 2011, the matter was referred to the United States Attorney's Office for consideration and continued investigation because of the possibility that the alleged conduct violated criminal laws. The United States Attorney's Office has expertise in dealing with allegations of misconduct on the part of public officials. Furthermore, the United States Attorney's Office prosecuted the individuals involved in the KU ticket case.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) reviewed and investigated the allegations. The Lawrence Police Department fully cooperated with federal authorities and made available any information and personnel requested by them. On January 10, 2012, the United States Attorney's Office advised the City it did not intend to pursue criminal charges in the matter. After receiving notice from the United States Attorney's Office that its review of the matter was closed, the City resumed its personnel review of the allegations. The focus of the investigation was to examine whether any relevant City or Police Department policies, rules, or procedures were violated. At a certain point in the investigation, two commissioned employees were placed on suspension. Suspension does not denote a finding of wrong doing, nor does it indicate a conclusion to an investigation.

Reaching an appropriate conclusion during personnel investigations is not unlike a criminal one. The procedure is one of due process and the Department is obligated to conform to legal and policy standards. While the investigation is in process, it is considered a personnel matter and subject to the personnel matter disclosure restrictions. Any information release and decisions must be based on the correct information and without a rush to judgment. Unless there is an identifiable danger to the public or potential for the miscarriage of justice the process must not be hurried. The City is fully aware of any disclosures that are required in regards to impeachment information of any personnel who are involved in the judicial process and has communicated with both the District Attorney's Office and Municipal Court.

There has rightly been great public interest in the details of the investigation. Now is the appropriate time to release more information on this matter.

The investigation thus far has found that one commissioned employee had a friendship relationship with a former employee of the KU Athletic Department. This relationship existed for some time and dates back to the late 1990s or early 2000s. As part of this relationship, the commissioned employee received free, discounted or otherwise special access to certain athletic events over the several years. At some point in the relationship, the former KU Athletic Department employee requested assistance with traffic citations. The investigation found that over the course of nine years the commissioned employee assisted in the fixing of at least six citations that can so far be determined: one in 2000, one in 2003, one in 2004, one in 2005, one in 2008, and one in 2009. "Fixing" is defined as the voiding of an issued citation before it is transferred to Municipal Court, the request for dismissal from Municipal Court, or intervening before the citation is issued.

During the course of events, the commissioned employee asked a second commissioned employee two to three times for assistance in the fixing of the citations. This second employee may have been the beneficiary of KU Athletic event tickets through the first employee. The other citations were fixed by asking the officers that issued or were about to issue a citation to void or not issue it. The requests to those officers were conveyed as a favor for the two commissioned employees and not one in which the issuing officer knowingly received anything in return.

The FBI's investigation did not disclose sufficient evidence to go forward with the prosecution of bribery or other criminal offenses that the United States Attorney's Office could pursue. However, this conduct violates the Department's gratuity and solicitation policies. The commissioned officer referred to above and referenced in the anonymous letter is no longer an employee of the Lawrence Police Department.

One additional commissioned employee remains suspended pending the conclusion of their personnel investigation. There is not an identified timetable for this as the Department continues to attempt to identify any further incidents. At this time, no other suspensions are anticipated.

The United States Attorney's Office complimented the Lawrence Police Department for its thorough review of the matter and understood the City's desire to have the complaint immediately reviewed by independent federal authorities. The City Manager and I are committed to ensuring that members of the Lawrence Police Department perform their duties in accordance with the high ethical standards of this community. The City Manager has directed that a full review of municipal citation dismissal procedures be undertaken to ensure greater transparency and accountability.

Tarik Khatib
Chief of Police