



VOLUSIA SHERIFF'S OFFICE

MICHAEL J. CHITWOOD, SHERIFF

Office of Chief Deputy Brian M. Henderson - Internal Affairs

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

REPORT NUMBER: IA 25-009

PERIOD COVERED: December 29, 2024 - July 21, 2025.

DATE REPORTED: December 04, 2025

SUBJECT NAME: Former Officer Matthew Layton
Former Lieutenant Bryan Craig

INVESTIGATING OFFICER: Lieutenant Ben Gordon, #7744
Volusia Sheriff's Office Internal Affairs

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

On November 12, 2025, Chief Joseph LaSata formally requested assistance from the Volusia Sheriff's Office with a recently closed internal affairs investigation. The internal affairs investigation in question was South Daytona IA 2025-MTL-01 which was expedited and closed out prior to the arrival of the new Chief of Police, Chief LaSata. The subject officer for the case was Officer Matthew Layton. Lieutenant Bryan Craig was assigned as the Internal Affairs investigator and was responsible for completing the case. To note, Lieutenant Craig and Officer Layton had resigned from the department prior to this request.

According to Chief LaSata, upon his arrival at the department and during his initial review of the matter, he identified several issues of concern he believed warranted review by an independent entity. These concerns included new potential policy violations by former Lieutenant Craig and former Officer Layton not investigated during the original investigation. Those allegations included untruthfulness, failure to comply with a direct order, and potential violations of criminal law. Of particular concern was the delay by the prior administration in initiating the investigation, as it created the appearance the matter was not being treated with the appropriate level of seriousness.

It should be noted, while speaking about the incident, Chief LaSata had already contacted Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) and requested they conduct an independent investigation to confirm whether or not criminal charges were applicable.

SOUTH DAYTONA POLICY:

Lieutenant Bryan Craig-

107.102 Untruthfulness – Employees shall not knowingly make false or untrue statements except as authorized in the performance of duties and as necessary to maintain covert operations during investigation of criminal activities or otherwise be untruthful in any matter.

Officer Matthew Layton-

106.26 Disobeying a Direct Order – Employees shall promptly obey all lawful orders issued by a superior or other competent authority, including orders relayed from a superior by an employee of the same or lesser rank. (CFA 2.03M)

107.16 Violations of Law – Members shall obey all the laws of the United States of America, the State of Florida, the County of Volusia, and the Ordinances of the City of South Daytona.

RE: Florida State Statute 784.048 – Stalking

107.102 Untruthfulness - Employees shall not knowingly make false or untrue statements except as authorized in the performance of duties and as necessary to maintain covert operations during investigation of criminal activities or otherwise be untruthful in any matter.

INVESTIGATION:

Chief Deputy Brian Henderson assigned the incident to the Volusia Sheriff's Office Internal Affairs Unit. This report details the Internal Affairs investigation conducted by Lieutenant Ben Gordon. On December 04, 2025, former Lieutenant Craig and former Officer Layton were mailed certified correspondence in reference to a Notice of Internal Investigation.

Interview with [REDACTED]

On January 9, 2026, at approximately 0935 hours, Lieutenant Gordon and Sergeant Vanzo conducted a sworn, recorded interview with [REDACTED]. The interview took place at the Sheriff's Office Administrative Building in downtown DeLand.

[REDACTED] began by explaining her family's connection to former Officer Matthew Layton through her brother Nick and his wife [REDACTED], whose daughter [REDACTED] was the same age as [REDACTED]'s daughter, [REDACTED]. In the summer 2024, [REDACTED] told [REDACTED] "Cop Matt" wanted her Snapchat. Moving forward, [REDACTED] began to closely monitor [REDACTED]'s Snapchat on her own personal phone and soon observed daily snaps [messages] from Layton. [REDACTED] described selfies where Layton asked, "How do I look?" and expressed concern. [REDACTED] said, "Why do you care what my [REDACTED] thinks you look like?" [REDACTED] added Layton created an anime-style cartoon, often calling her [REDACTED] "sus" and sending messages like "Gotham needs you sus." [REDACTED] believed Layton tracked [REDACTED]'s location via Snapchat, noting messages such as "Why are you home?" and "Oh what's going on, you sick today?" [REDACTED] summarized his presence and commented, "Everywhere we would go around South Daytona he would always be there." It

should be noted due to the extended timelapse, [REDACTED] was unable to provide exact dates, times, and locations on when this occurred. Because of this, [REDACTED] did not have any physical evidence to support this allegation.

During November 2024, [REDACTED]'s family returned from a camping trip as Layton pulled into the [REDACTED] parking lot facing their home. [REDACTED] showed [REDACTED] a video Layton recorded of the girls exiting the camper, accompanied by a prompt to help their parents. [REDACTED] reacted, *"why is he taking a video of you getting out of the camper...I don't like it."*

In December 2024, while [REDACTED] prepared for [REDACTED], [REDACTED] located questions from Layton concerning [REDACTED]'s whereabouts via SnapChat. [REDACTED] gave examples such as, *"where you at, are you good, is this like a game, is this a practice?"* [REDACTED] took screen shots of several snaps, after which she saw rapid deletions, *"He just starts deleting everything."* Seeking guidance on how to proceed with this inappropriate conduct, [REDACTED] spoke with a Sheriff's Office acquaintance who connected her with former Lieutenant Brian Craig. [REDACTED] prefaced the call by saying, *"I need you to take this professionally,"* and recalled Craig minimizing his personal ties to Layton, portraying limited contact. Craig told her, *"I'm gonna handle this,"* and directed [REDACTED] to remove Layton from [REDACTED]'s Snapchat, and promised [REDACTED] a follow-up notification after returning from vacation. [REDACTED] explained she never received follow-up notification and said, *"I didn't hear nothing."* Additionally, [REDACTED] made it clear she was providing the information to Craig for investigative purposes and intended it to be treated as an official complaint against Layton.

On February 4, 2025, an incident occurred involving [REDACTED]'s son and another juvenile female trespassing on the rooftop of a Publix located at 2400 S. Ridgewood Avenue in South Daytona. During the incident and while [REDACTED] was attempting to locate her son, she encountered Layton who was on duty and was dispatched to the scene. [REDACTED], who was in the vehicle with [REDACTED], immediately hid in fear upon seeing Layton. [REDACTED] advised Layton she was uncomfortable and requested another officer respond to handle the call. Layton agreed and, with supervisory approval, another officer assumed responsibility for the call. Body-worn camera (BWC) footage capturing the event was located and reviewed. The footage was consistent with [REDACTED]'s statement, and the details she provided aligned with what was both said and observed during the incident.

After the call had been completed and despite [REDACTED] telling Layton she was uncomfortable, Layton re-approached [REDACTED] in the parking lot. Layton reportedly said, *"I did speak with Brian and I completely understand now why you'd be upset."* Layton suggested [REDACTED]'s concern was the police scrutiny of her son, [REDACTED] corrected him, *"My son has nothing to do with this... you crossed lines with me."* After the rebuttal from [REDACTED], Layton claimed [REDACTED] asked for his Snapchat. After the interaction, [REDACTED], who was still in the vehicle during the conversation immediately told [REDACTED], *"He [Layton] lied, mom."*

Later in spring 2025, after a [REDACTED] where [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] juvenile niece] played on opposing [REDACTED]s, [REDACTED]'s son observed Layton parked near their home for roughly fifteen minutes. Soon after, [REDACTED] received a message from [REDACTED] featuring a photograph of Layton and the caption, *"Look who showed up and says hi."*

█ later learned an internal investigation had begun within South Daytona PD focused on identifying who informed a YouTube personality of the situation rather than evaluating Layton's conduct. Through others, including Layton's ex-girlfriend, █ learned Craig and Layton had a close, longstanding relationship, with jujitsu training and assistance in Layton's path into law enforcement. █ summarized her realization, *"That's how I knew... he brought him on and he kind of like shadowed him, kind of gave him priority."* █ believed Craig's earlier portrayal of his relationship with Layton was misleading, as he appeared to present himself as less closely associated with Layton than she later came to understand.

On June 6, 2025, Craig conducted a formal internal-affairs interview with █ in reference to the allegations she brought forth. █ brought a witness and confronted him directly, stating he [Craig], *"knew about this and did nothing."* Craig apologized for failing to follow up and said he had told Layton to stay away, though Layton still approached her after the Publix event.

█ was later informed the case had been closed in a hurried manner by Craig and former command staff, with Layton receiving only minor discipline for his actions. █'s immediate response was, *"of course he did."* █ subsequently learned Layton resigned after becoming aware FDLE would be conducting a criminal investigation into his conduct.

In closing, █ conveyed Layton's conduct toward her daughter was *"absolutely not"* appropriate or ethical for a law enforcement officer, and she viewed Craig's handling as lacking professionalism and honesty. █ summarized her view of the process as, *"I think he [Craig] swept it under the rug,"* believing he acted to protect Layton and later himself.

Interview with Lieutenant Jason Taylor

On January 23, 2026, at approximately 0938 hours, Lieutenant Gordon and Sergeant Vanzo conducted a sworn, recorded interview with South Daytona Fire Lieutenant Jason Taylor. The interview took place at the South Daytona Police Department.

Taylor first became aware of the incident on December 29, 2024, when the juvenile's mother, █, arrived at his residence and disclosed Snapchat messages between Officer Layton and █'s daughter █. Taylor recalled █ was extremely upset and told him she needed to speak in person due to the seriousness of what she discovered. Taylor and █ maintained a close relationship due to their children, █ and Taylor's daughter, being best friends. As a result of that relationship, █ confided in Taylor regarding her concerns.

Taylor described how █ had previously asked him whether he knew Layton, which he initially found strange. Upon learning █ was connected to Layton through her aunt's household, Taylor said he became concerned because he was aware of behavior in that household involved *"a lot of partying and young girls."* When █ showed him examples of the Snapchats, Taylor became upset due to his own daughter's close involvement and friendship with █, saying, *"My daughter is with her at all times."*

Taylor mentioned he did not want possession of the screenshots himself and instead followed his chain of command by reporting the matter to his Fire Chief at the time, John Brant, to follow proper protocol. Taylor believed the material observed could potentially warrant a criminal

investigation and wanted to ensure all actions were conducted in full compliance with applicable procedures and requirements. Brant instructed him to report the matter to Human Resources Director Trudy O'Dell. Taylor and Brant met with O'Dell in person and provided the information Taylor had received. All parties understood O'Dell would not be conducting any criminal investigation. However, because it was anticipated a criminal investigation might be initiated, [REDACTED]'s contact information was provided so any relevant digital or physical evidence could be identified and preserved for the appropriate investigative entity.

According to Taylor, O'Dell advised she would notify the Police Chief at the time who was Mark Cheatham. Taylor stated his reporting at that stage was verbal, but emphasized he fulfilled his obligation, stating, *"I did the right thing from the beginning."*

Taylor recalled feeling discouraged during the discussion with O'Dell. Taylor's concern stemmed from O'Dell appearing troubled by the incident and expressing limited confidence in the police department due to perceived *"cliques."* Taylor said the comment gave him an early sense something was off. Later the same day, [REDACTED] told Taylor she had spoken with O'Dell and sent the screenshots. According to Taylor, [REDACTED] anticipated follow-up from police administration, but no one ever contacted her.

As months passed with no action, Taylor said social media attention then surfaced and the situation began circulating within the police department. Taylor mentioned officers began discussing Layton extensively because, in his words, *"every officer had an issue with him."* Taylor said unconfirmed rumors and allegations started to emerge involving other young girls and conduct with Layton.

Taylor explained he became frustrated because instead of focusing on [REDACTED]'s complaint, South Daytona PD command staff began insinuating he was leaking information to a YouTube personality. Taylor described feeling he was being harassed and reached a breaking point in May 2025, saying, *"I feel like I'm being harassed now... I did the right thing and I feel like some of the admin officers were harassing me."*

On May 7, 2025, Taylor formally met with O'Dell again, to make a verbal complaint concerning how he was being treated. Taylor was also aware nothing had been done to follow up with [REDACTED]'s original complaint.

Taylor discussed what he described as three separate interviews by Former Lieutenant Brian Craig. Taylor explained the first interview occurred in May of 2025 after a YouTube personality confronted several personnel at the fire department. Taylor explained during the first round of interviews, Craig told Brant and Lieutenant Chad Hubeck he had no prior knowledge of the situation. Taylor disputed this, producing phone records showing a 23-minute call between [REDACTED] and Craig on December 30, 2024. Taylor stated he confronted Craig, telling him, *"I do have an issue with you...you had a conversation with [REDACTED] for 23 minutes and you're telling the Chief [Brant] you had no idea of this."*

Taylor recalled Craig responded by saying, *"I'm not being interviewed here,"* and insisted the call with [REDACTED] had nothing to do with the allegations. Taylor stated this was untrue, explaining [REDACTED] told him she had gone into detail with Craig about the Snapchats.

Taylor said the second interview involved Craig using a recorder, but he declined to add anything further at that time. The third interview occurred after Taylor returned from vacation. Taylor described a shift in Craig's demeanor, explaining he felt Craig was trying to intimidate him. Taylor said Craig presented him with a Garrity form and told him it was *"to protect"* him. Taylor responded, *"I'm not signing it,"* and described the interaction as an intimidation tactic, adding, *"I felt a hundred percent it was intimidation."* Craig also asked him to sign a release for his personal phone and work information. Taylor said he refused, telling Craig, *"I gave you everything I have."*

Taylor conveyed, Craig seemed far more focused on identifying who provided information to the YouTube personality rather than on investigating Layton's behavior and potential misconduct. According to Taylor, *"He was steering the ship... trying to get it off his name,"* and that Craig repeatedly redirected the conversation away from the complaint and toward who Taylor had spoken with. Taylor noted, Craig never answered substantive questions about examining AVL data [GPS] or conducting other investigative steps related to Layton.

Taylor further described the Publix roof incident involving [REDACTED]'s son. [REDACTED] called him during the event, upset Layton approached her despite Craig reportedly providing a direct order for Layton to stay away. During the initial interaction, [REDACTED] told Layton directly she did not want him near her or her daughter and reminded him Craig had instructed him to avoid contact. Taylor said Layton nevertheless reapproached her after the call and after she explained to him she wanted the call handled by another law enforcement officer. During that secondary contact, Layton began shifting blame by telling her [REDACTED] had initiated the Snapchat connection. According to Taylor, this incident upset [REDACTED] and reinforced concerns about Layton's behavior and Craig's lack of enforcement, saying, *"He [Layton] was told a direct order... and he didn't listen."*

Taylor also provided observations about Layton's conduct on duty, describing his demeanor as overly aggressive and unprofessional. Taylor recalled an incident involving an elderly woman during a traffic direction situation, stating Layton *"went ape shit on her... berating the old lady,"* and added, *"I've been doing this 16 years and I don't talk to people like that."*

In assessing Craig's role, Taylor was asked whether he believed Craig had been untruthful, Taylor responded, *"Yes, a hundred percent."* Taylor was also asked whether he believed Craig had fulfilled his duties and responsibilities as a lieutenant assigned to the Internal Affairs investigation, to which he responded, *"Absolutely not."* Taylor suspected this occurred because of Craig's friendship with Layton, explaining they knew each other through jujitsu and training circles, and Craig was involved in getting Layton into the department. Taylor said, *"It was obvious the two of them knew each other... they were commonly associated training together off duty."*

Taylor said he believed Craig's personal relationship with Layton influenced the investigation, stating, *"I feel like he was negligent... it's very well known he's friends with this guy."*

Regarding the delayed investigation, Taylor described the potential loss of significant digital evidence due to the lapse in time and the failure to obtain Layton's phone earlier. Taylor summarizing the impact by stating, *"You missed the most important thing of your job... preserve the scene, you didn't do your job."*

Taylor concluded by expressing his belief the complaint had been mishandled from the start. Taylor explained O'Dell followed proper procedure and notified command staff, but the information *"fell on deaf ears."* Taylor ultimately described Craig as *"nothing but a criminal or a bully with a badge,"* and emphasized his disappointment in someone he had known for a long time.

On the topic of Layton's behavior, he believed Layton had been *"grooming"* [REDACTED], citing statements such as Layton asking her about [REDACTED], whether she was [REDACTED] and other personal inquiries. Taylor expressed serious concern, saying, *"It seems like he was waiting for the moment the parents weren't home... then eventually do something. That's what it feels like in my gut."*

Taylor ended by explaining he never received closure from Craig regarding the investigation despite being told he would. Craig would later reverse his stance and told Taylor, he would need to find out the outcome from [REDACTED].

Interview with Sergeant Brian Grondin

On January 23, 2026, at approximately 1042 hours, Lieutenant Gordon and Sergeant Vanzo conducted a sworn, recorded interview with Sergeant Brian Grondin. The interview took place at the South Daytona Police Department.

Sergeant Grondin was present and working as the road supervisor during the incident that occurred at the Publix on February 4, 2025, as previously mentioned by both Lieutenant Taylor and [REDACTED]. Sergeant Grondin began discussing the incident involving former Officer Layton and recalled the incident clearly. Sergeant Grondin explained at the time, he was already on a death investigation call at the nearby ice rink when Layton was flagged down by two parents reporting their children missing and believed to be on the roof of the Sunshine Plaza. Sergeant Grondin summarized the initial information as *"there's juveniles on the roof so that's obviously not good."* Sergeant Grondin left his current call and responded to Layton's location. Upon arrival, Layton briefed him that a juvenile female and male, whom he believed were boyfriend and girlfriend, were on the back side of the Publix plaza roof.

Immediately after this briefing, Layton told Sergeant Grondin he preferred to have another officer handle the call because he was *"not on good terms with the mother."* Sergeant Grondin granted the request and coordinated a swap with another officer assigned nearby. Sergeant Grondin explained this was part of his effort to avoid conflicts of interest, stating he generally tried to *"remove any bias"* when officers had personal issues with involved parties.

Grondin explained after swapping out with the assisting officer, Layton later returned to the scene and recontacted the mother. Grondin observed the two speaking near her vehicle but did not hear their conversation. Sergeant Grondin stated he was positioned near the fire engine while Layton

and the mother spoke separately. Sergeant Grondin said the recontact occurred after Layton had already been relieved from the call. It should be noted, no BWC (body-worn camera) footage was located which captured the second interaction between Layton and [REDACTED].

Following the call, Layton explained to Sergeant Grondin why the mother was upset with him. Sergeant Grondin recalled Layton saying, *"the mother was not happy with him because something about her daughter had added him on Snapchat."* Layton conveyed a narrative suggesting the interaction was innocent, explaining to Sergeant Grondin the girl was a family friend and had added him online. Grondin summarized his understanding as, *"I thought this was the kind of situation where if you have a family friend's kid and they want to play games or something..."* According to Layton, he and the mother had later "worked out" and "squashed" the misunderstanding during their conversation in the parking lot.

Sergeant Grondin stated the mother did speak to him briefly, but only about the call itself and her son's behavior, not about Layton's conduct. Sergeant Grondin recalled, *"Nothing involving anything weird with Layton,"* was ever mentioned directly to him by the mother [REDACTED].

After the incident, Sergeant Grondin notified Lieutenant Brian Craig about what transpired. Sergeant Grondin conveyed he likely contacted him the following morning but could not recall the exact date or time. During that conversation, Craig told him, *"there was nothing to worry about."* Grondin emphasized Craig did not mention any investigation, any inquiry, or any directives to Layton regarding staying away from the mother or child. Sergeant Grondin added he later learned of more serious issues only months afterward, stating, *"If I knew what I know now back then, that would have been a problem for me."*

When asked what he would have done differently with the information now available, Sergeant Grondin stated he would have taken decisive action if he had known the full context. Sergeant Grondin said plainly, *"If I knew what I know now, I would have told Craig to get him the fuck off my shift."* Sergeant Grondin noted at the time he believed the issue between Layton and the mother was nothing more than a personal disagreement unrelated to misconduct.

When asked whether he had observed any misconduct by Layton or was aware of any related incidents, Sergeant Grondin explained he frequently served as the acting supervisor, often filling the sergeant role due to South Daytona's staffing structure. Sergeant Grondin commented, he has supervised Layton on a regular basis for the past few years and did not recall any prior complaints of unprofessional behavior or concerns involving Layton's interactions with juveniles. Sergeant Grondin mentioned, *"No issues with calls for service... no one calling in making complaints."*

Sergeant Grondin concluded by stating he had no additional recollections of suspicious behavior during Layton's tenure with the South Daytona Police Department. All of the details Sergeant Grondin observed during the incident at Publix were relayed to Craig. It should be noted while reviewing the case file completed by Craig during the original investigative, the incident at Publix was not referenced or documented.

Interview with Fire Lieutenant Chad Hubeck

On January 23, 2026, at approximately 1123 hours, Lieutenant Gordon and Sergeant Vanzo conducted a sworn, recorded interview with Fire Lieutenant Chad Hubeck. The interview took place at the residence of Hubeck due to external circumstances not related to the case.

Hubeck was questioned about his interactions with Layton and Craig and if he was aware of any incidents involving misconduct. Hubeck began by explaining he had been previously called into a brief meeting regarding the initial investigation. The time frame of the meeting was either on or around May [REDACTED], 2025, and Hubeck recalled the meeting included the Fire Chief John Brant and Operations Commander Don Howard. The meeting was described as *"very short"* and said he was asked to provide a synopsis of what he had heard about the matter. Hubeck mentioned he did not share the origin of his information and told them it was *"just hearsay of what was going on about some messages that were being sent."*

When asked about his perception of Craig's conduct during the meeting, Hubeck stated Craig appeared solely focused on identifying who shared the information. According to Hubeck, Craig did not appear intent on addressing the underlying concerns involving Layton's alleged inappropriate communication with a juvenile. Hubeck said, *"The concern felt like it was more about who was told rather than the situation itself."*

Additionally, during the same meeting, Craig appeared to portray himself as unaware of the allegation. Hubeck commented that Craig *"presented it like he had no idea, like he was clueless,"* and Craig acted as though *"this was the first time he had ever heard of this situation."* Hubeck later learned Craig had been aware of the matter earlier, stating, *"From what I heard he was well aware of what was going on."*

Hubeck described Craig's line of questioning as focused primarily on the circulation of information and trying to locate the personnel providing information to subject(s) outside of city employees. Hubeck emphasized Craig asked him who he heard it from and what he heard, noting the interview felt like an attempt to trace rumors. Hubeck communicated, *"It felt like they were more concerned about who knew and what they knew than about the girl and what she went through."* Additionally, Hubeck remembered getting *"weird vibes"* during the interaction and believed the department's priorities were misplaced. Hubeck was clear to point out he did not observe unprofessional behavior by Craig during the meeting, but felt the process lacked formality and did not resemble an authentic internal affairs investigation. Hubeck elaborated it *"didn't seem official"* and commented the focus was misplaced, stating, *"Are you doing the investigation for the victim or are you doing it because you don't know what information got out and... wanna put that back in the bucket?"*

When asked whether Craig's conduct seemed appropriate for an internal affairs investigation, Hubeck expressed concern about the investigative posture. Hubeck recalled the interaction felt negligent and stated it gave him the impression *"they were trying to... cover something up."* When asked why, Hubeck pointed to the line of questioning and the odd nature of acting ignorant to the allegations mentioned by [REDACTED] with whom he was in direct contact.

Hubeck also confirmed multiple personnel on his shift were interviewed by Craig around the same time. According to Hubeck, each interview was extremely brief, lasting *"two to three minutes maybe,"* reinforcing his impression Craig, was not attempting to gather substantive information about the alleged misconduct.

In closing Hubeck expressed concern about the delay between notification and action by the administration, stating the lack of urgency was troubling. Hubeck explained this delay, combined with the superficial approach taken by Craig, was concerning to him.

Interview with Director Trudy O'Dell

On January 23, 2026, at approximately 1123 hours, Lieutenant Gordon and Sergeant Vanzo conducted a sworn, recorded interview with Human Resource Director Trudy O'Dell. The interview took place at the South Daytona Police Department.

O'Dell began the interview by stating she had been employed with the City of South Daytona for twenty-three years and was familiar with the original investigation. O'Dell stated her first direct involvement occurred on January 2, 2025, when Lieutenant Jason Taylor and Fire Chief John Brant arrived at her office and reported Taylor's daughter's best friend had been receiving text messages from Matthew Layton, who was a police officer at the time. O'Dell recalled Taylor asked whether the juvenile's mother, [REDACTED], could contact her to provide information for review. O'Dell responded [REDACTED] could and later spoke with her that same day. It was at this time, O'Dell received screenshots of the messages between Layton and [REDACTED].

Following receipt of this information, O'Dell immediately contacted the Police Chief Mark Cheatham who came to her office. As previously stated, Cheatham was serving as Chief of Police when the incident was originally reported and later resigned abruptly after social media videos circulated alleging the matter had not been properly investigated.

According to O'Dell, all of the information to include what [REDACTED] and Taylor had provided was in turn provided to Cheatham specifically including the allegation involving Layton's inappropriate communication with a juvenile. O'Dell explained she did not believe she sent the screenshots to Cheatham, but she informed him there were messages and evidence available. O'Dell summarized her recollection of this exchange by stating she told him what she knew, and he responded by saying *"he'd take it from there."* O'Dell indicated she had no way of knowing whether this was the first time he had heard the information.

After that initial notification, O'Dell stated she heard nothing further about the matter and assumed it had been handled by Cheatham and his administration. O'Dell remained unaware of any developments, until videos involving a YouTube personality surfaced online. O'Dell explained she generally avoided his videos but became aware the issue had resurfaced due to his postings.

Only after a resurgence of social media pressure appeared in May 2025 was an Internal Affairs investigation initiated. O'Dell later participated in an internal affairs interview conducted by Craig. O'Dell stated this was the only time Craig discussed the matter with her. O'Dell said Craig conducted himself professionally when he interviewed her and did not raise any red flags during

their conversation. O'Dell provided all of the documents [REDACTED] had sent her to Craig for this investigation.

Reflecting on January 2, 2025, O'Dell reiterated she believed she had not provided the actual screenshots to Cheatham. Instead, O'Dell communicated the existence of evidence, the names involved, and the concerning nature of the allegation. O'Dell explained, *"I guess I just felt like he would conduct his own investigation,"* and that there might be procedural reasons she should not collect evidence beyond initial reporting.

O'Dell had no memory of further discussions with Cheatham or former Deputy Chief Pignataro after the initial notification and said she did not receive follow-up from either administrator. O'Dell assumed the matter had been handled and reasoned she does not typically involve herself in police-specific investigative processes, saying her responsibility was to notify her chain of command because she lacked authority to initiate an IA or investigate officer misconduct directly.

When asked to reflect professionally, O'Dell stated she felt she properly fulfilled her duty by notifying the Chief immediately. Personally, she expressed hindsight regret, stating, *"I do wish I would have followed up."* O'Dell emphasized she did not ordinarily question Cheatham or Pignataro regarding police-related complaints. O'Dell explained such complaints rarely come through her office, stating this type of situation had only occurred *"two or three times"* in her tenure. O'Dell clarified complaints of this nature typically originate with Police Department supervisors, not a civilian HR office.

O'Dell confirmed she had no further involvement until the IA interview with Craig. She confirmed she never heard from [REDACTED] again after January 2 and received no frustration or inquiries from her regarding lack of follow-up. O'Dell also stated she later became aware Taylor submitted a written complaint, but she did not see his documentation until after the IA was completed.

In closing, O'Dell stated she had no additional information and believed she had done what she was supposed to do as HR Director: immediately notify the Chief of Police of a potentially serious matter. O'Dell emphasized the unusual nature of this particular complaint coming through her office and noted, *"This was a little different."*

Interview with former South Daytona Fire Chief John Brant

On February 12, 2026, at approximately 0840 hours, Lieutenant Gordon and Sergeant Vanzo conducted a sworn, recorded interview with former South Daytona Fire Chief John Brant. The interview took place at the Volusia Sheriff's Office located at 123 W Indiana Ave, Deland.

Brant explained his involvement began on January 2, 2025, when Fire Lieutenant Jason Taylor approached him to report concerning information involving Taylor's daughter's best friend, (female juvenile) and her interactions with former Officer Layton. According to Brant, Taylor told him, Layton was messaging the young juvenile female and the messages were inappropriate. Brant stated he immediately recognized the seriousness of an adult messaging a youth and believed he had an obligation to act as Taylor's supervisor and department head in the matter. Brant explained, *"anytime we have an adult messaging a youth we need to at least do our due diligence and look into it."*

In response, Brant accompanied Taylor and went to Human Resources Director Trudy O'Dell. Brant said Taylor relayed the information to O'Dell and she told them she would inform the Police Chief at the time, Mark Cheatham. According to Brant, O'Dell contacted the juvenile's mother, [REDACTED], to obtain the initial screenshots Taylor had referenced while explaining the situation to O'Dell.

Brant said Taylor wished to minimize his involvement due to his position within the city, explaining Taylor did not want any further involvement and only wanted the conduct he became aware of to be investigated. Brant conveyed he understood the concern and believed they had properly reported the matter.

Brant said after notifying O'Dell, he received no follow-up from the Police Department in reference to what was reported. Taylor periodically asked him whether he had heard anything, and Brant repeatedly told him he had not. Brant later stated, on an unknown date and time, O'Dell informed him she had contacted the Police Chief [Cheatham] and provided notification. Based on that information, he believed an investigation would follow; however, Brant said *"nothing happened for several months."* Brant confirmed neither Cheatham nor Deputy Chief Pignataro provided any updates, reached out to him about possible additional information, nor made any comments to him during that time about the incident.

Brant later became aware, former Lieutenant Brian Craig intended to interview Taylor. Brant said Craig contacted him and asked whether he could speak with Taylor. Brant agreed and attended the meeting as a witness upon Taylor's request. Brant emphasized the interview was *"completely off record,"* and Craig did not record it. Brant recalled Craig stating he was unaware of the situation, despite Brant knowing Craig had spoken with [REDACTED] previously. Brant explained Taylor showed him a call log confirming the prior communication and stated, *"I knew he did because... [REDACTED] had talked to him on the phone."*

Brant reported during the discussion, he believed Craig issued verbal instructions to Layton about not contacting [REDACTED] or her daughter; however, later noted he did not see or hear any written directive to support this.

Brant described Craig's questions as focused not on the underlying allegation but on identifying who shared information with YouTube personality. Both he and Taylor felt Craig was only interested in *"who Jason told"* and not the facts of the case. Brant explained the inquiry appeared to be directed at stopping the spread of information rather than investigating the potential misconduct, saying the effort resembled, *"a witch hunt"* trying to find who was disclosing information to the YouTube personality.

Brant said Craig later conducted a second, formal interview with Taylor during which Taylor confronted Craig about prior knowledge based on the phone records. According to Brant, Craig attempted to downplay the earlier call with [REDACTED] by suggesting he had not understood the depth of the concern. Brant found this difficult to believe, particularly because O'Dell had explicitly notified the Chief of Police, and Brant and Taylor had provided detailed initial information.

Brant further reported telling interim Chief at the time Pignataro the fact Craig lied about his initial knowledge. Brant said Pignataro told him he had sent Craig to interview Taylor and added, *"this is not the first time Brian Craig's told lies or misrepresented the truth."*

Brant also noted both Cheatham and Pignataro retired suddenly within a short timeframe. Brant said these departures were abrupt and without explanation, stating he never spoke to either of them again.

Brant stated he was never contacted to provide a recorded statement during Craig's IA investigation, nor did Craig question him beyond the off-record conversations involving Taylor. According to Brant, Craig eventually interviewed many firefighters, but the questioning remained centered on *"what was you told and then who did you tell."*

Reflecting on the entire process, Brant described the handling of the matter as *"poorly."* He stated, *"If they worked for the Fire Department they would be fired on the spot,"* explaining he believed the investigative response lacked competence and timeliness. Brant emphasized he did not know whether the mishandling stemmed from incompetence or ulterior motives and noted rumors existed about Craig and Layton being friends through jujitsu, though Brant stated he had no personal confirmation of their relationship.

Brant confirmed he never met or spoke with [REDACTED] and acted only as a conduit to ensure Taylor's concerns were reported to the appropriate authorities. Brant concluded by stating he had no additional information beyond what he recounted and reiterated he had attempted to recall details as accurately as possible.

Relevant Details

On January 22, 2026, Lieutenant Gordon contacted former Chief of Police Mark Cheatham. Cheatham was asked whether he was willing to provide a statement regarding this investigation, he declined to participate. During discussion of a possible statement, Cheatham acknowledged a basic understanding of the original incident and made remarks of concern. Cheatham attempted to explain the delay in initiating the investigation by citing a lack of information, specifically not knowing the identity of the officer who had been messaging an underage juvenile female. Cheatham further stated the department did not determine the subject was former Officer Layton until after he had "stepped back." This was directly contrary to the statements of O'Dell, Brant, and Taylor. It should be noted this conversation took place over the phone therefore, it was not sworn to nor was it recorded.

On February 2, 2026, Lieutenant Gordon contacted former Interim Chief and former Deputy Chief Pignataro. Pignataro was also asked if he was willing to provide a statement in reference to the investigation. Pignataro declined to participate.

On the same date, Lieutenant Gordon was notified by FDLE the criminal review of this case had been concluded. FDLE determined the conduct initiated by Layton did not rise to a level warranting criminal prosecution. As a result, FDLE closed its investigation.

On March 3, 2026, Lieutenant Gordon contacted Layton and confirmed Layton had received formal Notice of the Internal Affairs investigation. Layton was asked whether he would participate in an interview, at which time he stated he would consult with legal counsel and advise whether he was willing to participate. As of the date of this report, Layton has not notified Lieutenant Gordon of his decision.

Also on March 3, 2026, Lieutenant Gordon also spoke with former Lieutenant Brian Craig and he too confirmed receipt of his Notice of Internal Affairs investigation. Craig refused to provide an interview in reference to the allegations but confirmed he would like to submit a statement to be included in the final report of investigation. Lieutenant Gordon gave Craig a deadline that such statement would need to be completed by March [REDACTED], 2026. As of the completion of this report, no such statement has been submitted by Craig.

According to witness testimony, Craig did intentionally provide false information to various members involved in the internal investigation. The reason for doing so remains unknown. Although the conduct may have been intended to preserve the integrity of the investigation or avoid influencing a witness, it could also have been a more unacceptable motive which cannot be excluded due to the inability to obtain a direct interview with Craig.

While investigating whether Craig issued a direct order prohibiting contact with [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], Lieutenant Gordon determined the following: Craig became aware in December 2024, of potential criminal and policy violations involving inappropriate communication between Layton and [REDACTED]. Despite the seriousness of the allegation, Craig did not take any action consistent with established procedures for complaints of this nature. Instead of contacting Layton directly and issuing a clear order to cease all communication with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], Craig instructed [REDACTED] to convey the message herself (reference the sworn recorded interview between Craig and Layton during South Daytona IA 2025-MTL-01). As a result, it was unable to be determined whether Layton violated any direct order provided by Craig.

Additionally, during review of the case file for South Daytona IA 2025-MTL-01, Craig was found to have drafted a memorandum dated May 21, 2025. The memorandum contained several concerning statements and reflected a clear lack of understanding of the information provided by [REDACTED]. One statement in particular read, *"I explained to her [REDACTED] the actions of the officer are odd, but didn't violate any policies."* This conclusion was especially concerning because Craig later completed an Internal Affairs investigation involving the same conduct and ultimately issued discipline to Layton for policy violations because of his [Craig's] own investigation. Craig also wrote, [REDACTED] initially contacted him only to seek guidance; however, according to [REDACTED], she believed she was making a complaint requiring investigation. Regardless of [REDACTED]'s exact wording, Craig's law enforcement experience, basic investigative knowledge, and the sensitive nature of the allegations, should have prompted a different response or, at a minimum, follow-up with [REDACTED]. Craig's failure to properly address the matter reflects a potential neglect of duty, whether caused by direction from the previous South Daytona Police Department Administration or his own personal deficiencies.

CONCLUSION:

Upon completion and review by Chief Deputy Henderson, this Internal Affairs investigative report will be hand delivered to Chief LaSata. All subsequent disciplinary action, if any, and/or completed documents to be submitted to FDLE will be completed by the South Daytona Police Department.

EXHIBITS:

- A. Report of Investigation
- B. Official Correspondence
- C. South Daytona Case Packet
- D. Transcript of Interview with [REDACTED]
- E. Transcript of Interview with Lieutenant Jason Taylor
- F. Transcript of Interview with Sergeant Brian Gronden
- G. Transcript of Interview with Lieutenant Chad Hubeck
- H. Transcript of Interview with Former Fire Chief John Brant
- I. Transcript of Interview with Human Resource Director Trudy O'Dell
- J. Digital Evidence

WITNESSES:

City of South Daytona

1672 S Ridgewood Ave,

South Daytona, FL 32119

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

South Daytona Police Sergeant Brian Gronden

South Daytona Fire Lieutenant Chad Hubeck

South Daytona Fire Lieutenant Jason Taylor

Former South Daytona Fire Chief John Brant

South Daytona Human Resource Director Trudy O'Dell

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.

AND

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: _____



Lieutenant Ben Gordon, #7744

Internal Affairs Commander

DATE: _____

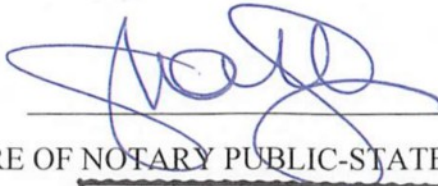
4/14/26

STATE OF FLORIDA

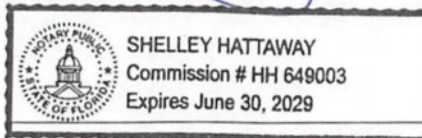
COUNTY OF VOLUSIA

Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me by means of ☒ physical presence or ☐ online

Notarized this 14th day of April, 2026 by Lieutenant Ben Gordon.



SIGNATURE OF NOTARY PUBLIC-STATE OF FLORIDA



PRINT, TYPE, OR STAMP COMMISSIONED NAME OF NOTARY PUBLIC

☒ PERSONALLY KNOWN OR ☐ PRODUCED IDENTIFICATION

TYPE OF IDENTIFICATION PRODUCED

APPROVED BY: _____



DATE: 04/14/26

CHIEF DEPUTY BRIAN HENDERSON

VOLUSIA COUNTY, FLORIDA