

The Deerwood City Council has reviewed the complaint by Crow Wing County Sheriff Scott Goddard against Deerwood Police Chief Mark Taylor and has come to the conclusion that Chief Taylor's actions were not only legal, but also in the best interests of his own position, the Deerwood Police Department and City of Deerwood as well.

The issue in the complaint was Chief Taylor's recording of conversations with retired Crosby Chief Kim Coughlin and retired Lieutenant Kevin Randolph, both of whom were not retired at the time. Given their track record of twice firing officer Jesse Smith, only to see him reinstated twice; and bringing multiple charges against Crosby Mayor Jim Hunter, all of which were either dismissed or found to be not guilty, Chief Taylor made the decision to record conversations when both Chief Coughlin and Lieutenant Randolph started calling him with accusations including at one point to sue the City of Deerwood. Similar calls were also being made at times to Deerwood Mayor Mike Aulie who did not record the calls.

The Deerwood City Council further expresses their disappointment with the way Sheriff Goddard made the decision in his letter of May 14, 2021 to restrict Deerwood police department personnel from all Crow Wing County Sheriff's Office-controlled buildings with the exception of the sally port and pre-book areas. According to his letter, the decision was made based on an article in the Crosby Courier May 5, 2021. At no time, did he contact either Chief Taylor or Mayor Aulie to air his concerns or seek an explanation. As such, he entered the County into a tenuous and political situation between the Crosby and Deerwood police departments, a relationship that we see improving with the new leadership in Crosby.

We can understand Chief Goddard maybe being uncomfortable with law enforcement officers being recorded, especially by other officers. However, in today's world, police officers should be aware of increased public scrutiny and recordings. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies themselves are making growing use of squad and body cam recordings for their own protection.

In conclusion, the Deerwood City Council asks Sheriff Goddard to remove his ban on the Deerwood Police Department and allow our officers to interact with county law enforcement as they have done in the past for the good and safety of all our citizens.