



# BARBALUNGA FOR SHERIFF

Press Release: 08/23/22

**“Time For Change – Justice That Works”**

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## **BARBALUNGA SAYS BOWLER’S “DYNASTY” TAKES CARE OF THOSE AT THE TOP WHILE HE ASKS RANK AND FILE TO MAKE SACRIFICES**

Berkshire County—Alf Barbalunga, a Democratic candidate for Berkshire County Sheriff, says while the sheriff has always stayed within his budget, it’s how he builds his “House of Cards” and uses his budget that troubles him:

“You can give a child \$20 and he might spend it all on candy or he might put it in his piggy bank for a rainy day. This election is about fiscal decision-making.” says Barbalunga.

“I’ll give you an example. Take the sheriff’s ‘part-time’ CFO. In 2011, she earned \$46,240. Reasonable. In 2019, after annual increases, his CFO earned \$61,931 ‘part-time’. That’s a 34% salary increase in 8 years. In 2020, she earned \$123,490, with no overtime, buyout or other pay. Her salary just doubled, again ‘part-time’. In 2021, she earned \$139,325, another \$15,000 raise. Additionally, the state also reports she earned \$54,600 from a state pension from the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office in 2021. She does not live in Berkshire County, and I am told she spends most of her time in the state of Florida. I didn’t even know that was possible!”

“If the state is right, that’s over \$200,000 in taxpayer dollars to a ‘part-time’ employee. That’s what I call a ‘Triple P--Payroll Pension Patriot’. And, that’s part of the issue with the sheriff’s ‘empire’ or ‘dynasty’ as he calls it. Spending seems unchecked, and there are unfortunate negative consequences to the rank-and-file employees when money gets understandably tight, due to his spending tendencies.”

For example, in November of 2020, the sheriff reported he had an unexpected budget shortfall from the state. He asked his staff to give up 2 hours per week in pay, for which they would later receive “comp time” so he could save the money needed to avoid layoffs.

“I get it. I’ve seen the state do things like this before. I’ve been asked to take ‘comp time’, and I’ve even offered to take a pay cut and not receive ‘comp time’. My issue is the other decisions made that year and the following year.”

For example, in 2020, the sheriff doubled this same ‘part-time’ CFO’s salary with a \$61,000 raise. And, in 2020, he added yet another captain to the ranks from outside the department, another Pittsfield police officer, who earned \$86,607 with overtime for a partial-year salary in 2020. That was a \$147,000 hit to the budget. Then, in 2021, that captain earned \$94,380.

“Again, it never stops. This captain may be a great guy, but did we really need another captain added to the ranks from outside the Sheriff’s Office with no correctional experience whatsoever?”

“The sheriff has to remember his job is to be fiscally responsible, not to take care of friends or family members of existing employees. And, when crunch-time came, the sheriff did not ask his executives to give up their take-home cars and gas cards because that would impact the “dynasty” lifestyle. Instead, he asked his rank-and-file employees, those at the bottom end of the pay-scale, to take a cut in their paychecks to preserve the status quo.”

Additionally, in December of 2020 during the cut in pay, the sheriff suddenly promoted seven individuals to the rank of sergeant, which came with companion pay raises.

“I know I’ve said we should promote from within, and I mean no disrespect to any of those individuals. However, did we suddenly need to add seven sergeants during a budget shortfall right after people had taken pay cuts and seven individuals took early retirement buy outs? This meant raises during pay cuts, and now the state is on the hook for pensions and salaries. And did these seven new sergeants apply for promotions or open positions? Did they meet promotional tests or criteria? That’s a discussion for a soon to be issued press release.”

“These kinds of actions, aside from reflecting the decisions of someone who consistently rewards those he favors with perks and high pay, hurt the morale of the rank-and-file employees. That’s why I have been asked to step up. The sheriff may get a few of his employees to write letters to the Eagle, but the people who talk to me don’t like it.”

Alf is happy to report that the rank and file who took pay cuts did eventually receive their back pay, but in the meantime, they had to make sacrifices while those at the top continued to enjoy their executive lifestyle and earn large raises.

See official documentation on the following page, posted online by a “whistleblower” employee as part of their Facebook complaint.



Thomas Bowler  
Sheriff

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November 2, 2020

**NOTICE TO ALL STAFF**

As most of you know, we are in the midst of a budget shortfall for this fiscal year. The Commonwealth's failure to fully fund the collective bargaining agreements have left us with a nearly \$600,000 hole to fill. We have examined our budget line item by line item to determine where we could reduce spending. Because salaries make up nearly 87% of our annual budget, we need to look to reduce staffing levels.

The first step was to offer an early retirement option, which 7 staff members took advantage of. The savings from these retirements won't be fully realized until the next fiscal year, however, as many of those staff had significant payouts. That still leaves us in a position to conduct layoffs, or to get creative so that we retain as many staff members as possible.

I am proposing a solution that we implemented almost 8 years ago. If every staff member of the Sheriff's Office continues to work their 40 hour workweek, and receive pay for 38 hours during that time, with 2 hours of compensatory time awarded, then we will save the amount of our projected shortfall. Going into next fiscal year we will be in a much better financial position. We would implement this agreement beginning on November 22, 2020, and run through the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2020). Without this agreement, it will be necessary to conduct layoffs, which will affect all areas of the Sheriff's Office.

I will be attending roll calls and department meetings this week to further explain this proposal and answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Bowler".

Thomas Bowler  
Sheriff

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***JUSTICE THAT WORKS***