



BARBALUNGA FOR SHERIFF

Press Release: 08/29/22

“Time For Change – Justice That Works”

Contact: Katherine Yon, Communications Director: klyon1105@aol.com

BARBALUNGA SAYS PUDGE’S BUDGET PADDED WITH PATRONAGE: PAYROLL TO PENSION PATRIOTS AND THE CAPTAIN PIPELINE

Berkshire County—Alf Barbalunga, a Democratic candidate for Berkshire County Sheriff, says a number of employees have reached out to him or posted whistleblower complaints online regarding morale issues created by the sheriff’s patronage practice of hiring white male associates of the sheriff as “direct to Captains.”

“These patronage hires may be great individuals or employees once hired, but I’m not focusing on performance. I can’t evaluate that. The complaints I’m getting are that rank-and-file employees who put in their time for years and are qualified are watching the sheriff create positions for captains and then hiring directly from the outside. This adds to the payroll, and then staff is further demoralized when these individuals retire with pensions a short time later,” says Barbalunga.

“For example, we had only two Captain-II’s on payroll in 2015, and both were hired with no corrections training. Both subsequently retired several years later, while others who have worked for years or decades are passed over for promotional opportunities.”

Take the case of the K-9 Officer, whom we will call Officer-F for purposes of the release. A whistleblower employee posted this story on Facebook, and we verified it through our own investigation with additional sources. In 2013, the sheriff created an open position for a K-9 officer. One of the sheriff’s existing employees was a military vet who had been a K-9 officer in the service. Naturally, he saw an opportunity and put in for the promotion. However, instead, the sheriff hired Officer-F from the Pittsfield Police as a Shift Supervisor Captain and canine officer; he was paid \$57,756 for that title and was promoted that year to a Captain-II and was paid an additional \$16,753 under that title. By 2018, he was earning over \$100,000 per year, and when he announced his retirement in 2020, Officer-F told someone interested in taking over his canine job, that the sheriff wasn’t going to fill his position after he left.

After Officer-F retired on June 27, 2020, and began collecting a pension, the canine officer position was eliminated. Officer-F earned \$81,363 including buyout, overtime, and other pay in 2020, and existing qualified employees were not given an opportunity to fill his role. By all accounts, including that of the whistleblower, Officer-F was a fine employee and canine officer, but that isn’t the point.

The point is that the **sheriff created a position for a captain/canine officer, hired someone from PPD, paid this Officer-F over \$700,000 from 2013-2020, and then closed the canine position immediately after his retirement.** Additionally, the sheriff then re-hired Officer-F after retirement in 2021 as a contract employee making \$15,360 in 2021, and \$5,320 so far in 2022. He is now a "**Triple P**" - **Payroll Pension Patriot!**

Then, there is the case of Officer-N, another PPD officer the sheriff hired as an Assistant Director of Security in 2014, a position that did not exist before he was hired and did not exist afterwards. He earned \$7,129 in 2014 after being hired at the end of the year and \$102,088 in 2015. First, \$24,879 as the Assistant Director of Security until that title was eliminated, and then \$77,209 as a Captain-II, following his promotion. He was retitled/promoted to Primary Captain again in 2018, ironically, a year in which he was named as a defendant in a workplace gender discrimination lawsuit filed against the sheriff and other male employees, in which he is accused of retaliatory behavior towards a female employee. In 2019, he received a raise. He earned a total of \$618,072 from the end of 2014 until his retirement in October 3, 2020, averaging over \$100,000 per full year's employment. He now also earns a pension from the state.

In 2020, Officer-S, another PPD officer, was hired in as a Captain II, earning \$86,607 in 2020 and \$94,380 in 2021. He remains employed as a captain. His spouse was hired in 2019 as a part-time contract employee and then as a part-time specialized employee in 2020, a position she currently holds. She earned \$159,074 as this part-time specialized employee in 2021. Both may be fine employees, but that isn't the point; instead, again, we have a white male PPD officer directly hired above existing employees to the rank of captain, and now, ironically, he works alongside his spouse under the sheriff. We are happy for them for the arrangement, but again, morale suffers when people from the outside are hired as captains, and minorities are passed up for senior roles.

In 2014, Officer-B was hired from the Pittsfield Police Department as an Investigator earning \$63,688 in that year. In 2015, he was promoted to Captain. In 2021, he earned \$95,877 and remains employed to this day.

These are the four most commonly referred to individuals who were hired as direct-to-captains that affect the morale of rank-and-file employees. Two who retired after a short stint as a captain to enjoy a state pension, and two who remain employed. We are told there are other white males who have been hired in for high rank positions due to patronage and friendship, some unqualified for their roles, though we cannot verify their names at this time, but we will shortly.

Additionally, there is the case of the former Superintendent and Special Sheriff who was hired "part time" after his retirement with a six-figure pension to work on non-profit activities in the community. He was on the sheriff's payroll, which was reportedly reimbursed from charity grants.

While the Special Sheriff is a fine individual and may be a good worker, he was paid \$36,309 part-time in 2022 between January and June. The Berkshire Eagle reported he worked an average of 20 hours per week; that's \$1500 per week for 6 months to help out with grants and deliver meals, at **\$75 per hour** (Note: The sheriff's payroll is bi-weekly - \$36,309 is roughly \$1500 week for 6 months).

"Once again," says, Barbalunga, "I will state for the record that I have known the Special Sheriff since I was knee high to a grasshopper, and as I said to the Eagle, he has always been a man of formidable integrity. I truly believe he would have volunteered for no compensation, to watch sandwiches being made. My issue is never with him, rather it's with the sheriff throwing around patronage payroll positions, whether from direct appropriations budgets, or grants funded by the state, or other agencies. **It gets back to Bowler's statement about wanting to build a dynasty. He takes care of his favorites, his friends, while others who work hard don't get opportunities. If elected, I will end these patronage practices, dismantle the Bowler dynasty once and for all, and provide legitimate employment opportunities to all Berkshire communities, including for woman and people of color.**"

"I have taken an oath to serve no more than two terms, ideally one. I have set goals I want to accomplish to bring this jail out of the age of empires and dynasties and clandestine budgets, and into the era of equality, diversity, and transparency. I want employees to be hired and promoted based on merit, not favoritism. Talent, not loyalty. Hopefully, if elected, I will set the trend for the remainder of the 21st century."

Officers B, F, N & S name key provided to media upon request, for Press Release authentication.

TIME FOR CHANGE



JUSTICE THAT WORKS