

Mark J Ambrose

Statement on Interim Chief John Kelly's Inappropriate Conduct involving my son.

June 17, 2018

- In February of 2018 I was told by Interim Chief John Kelly that everything should be done to select a firefighter's child that wants to become a firefighter, this led me to believe Interim Chief John Kelly is in my son's corner.
- During the same time period, Interim Chief John Kelly regularly told my son he's pulling for him to be selected as a new firefighter.
- Starting sometime in 2015 and continuing until sometime in 2018, Interim Chief John Kelly developed a personal relationship with my son, encouraged my son to ride with him on fire calls and encouraged my son to hang out with him and others at the firehouse.
- On March 1, 2018, I found out that my son was not selected to be hired as a new firefighter for the April 2018 recruit class. This was very disappointing to me.
- On March 2, 2018, I met with my son, told him he was not selected to be a new firefighter, told him not to believe the statements others were making that he would be selected, and told him that he had to be professional as there could be an opportunity in the future, but there is nothing that can be done right now. This was very disappointing to my son.
- As a result of talking with my son that he was not being selected, my son told me about and proceeded to show to me some text messages from October 2015 to November 22, 2107 between Interim Chief John Kelly and himself. My son told me that Interim Chief Kelly told him many times "don't tell your Dad". I was appalled as a parent and dedicated long-term member of the Utica Fire Department. I believe Interim Chief John Kelly's conduct to be inappropriate, but in any event, the text messages speak for themselves.
- Subsequent to March 2, 2018 I gathered copies of the text messages between Interim Chief John Kelly and my son which revealed that the inappropriate activities and communications took place on Utica Fire Department property and at Interim Chief John Kelly's home while both on and off duty for the Utica Fire Department.
- After gathering the copies of the text messages, I contacted my attorneys to discuss the matter.
- My attorneys informed me that they believed the text messages did not reveal any criminal activity since my son was slightly older than a minor, but in their opinion the actions of Interim Chief John Kelly were inappropriate for a high-ranking official of an organization to which my son was seeking employment and there may be violations of civil law.

- In light of the other recently publicized incident of misconduct by a firefighter, I informed my attorneys that I felt it would be in the best interests of the Utica Fire Department, the City of Utica and Mayor Palmieri to bring the text messages to Mayor Palmieri as I had faith he would do what is in the best interests of the Utica Fire Department and the City of Utica.
- My attorneys informed me that bringing this information forward would eliminate any chance my son would get a job with the Utica Fire Department and would virtually eliminate my chance of getting promoted in the future.
- As a father and a human being, I feel that trying to help prevent individuals from abusing their official positions and other types of predators from taking advantage of my son and any other person's child is more important than both my son's and my job aspirations.
- On March 14, 2018, I met with Mayor Palmieri and provided him 19 pages of screen shots of text messages between Interim Chief John Kelly and my son. He read the messages in front of me and said, "Have I told you how much I don't like my job right now?". While I was with Mayor Palmieri he contacted Utica City corporation counsel Bill Borrill. There was little discussion between Mayor Palmieri and myself at that meeting, as the text messages spoke for themselves.
- On April 4, 2018, Professional Standard of the Utica Police Department was given a thumb drive with all of the text messages.
- On June 8, 2018, I was informed by my attorneys that the criminal investigation relating to the inappropriate text messages between Interim Chief John Kelly and my son had been closed, since no criminal activity had occurred.
- On June 11, 2018, during my interview for the Assistant Fire Chief's position with Mayor Palmieri, Sonny Greco and Interim Chief John Kelly, it was implied to me that nothing further would occur regarding the inappropriate conduct of Interim Chief John Kelly, and that the next chief of the Utica Fire Department is going to be Interim Chief John Kelly.
- I have heard rumors that Mayor Palmieri alleges that I have known of the inappropriate conduct of Interim Chief John Kelly and the text messages for years and have been waiting to use this information as leverage to gain a promotion to Chief of the Fire Department. That rumor is absurd and the allegation insulting, I am an honorable man, a father first and have served my entire firefighter career with many honorable men and women. I merely tried to do what I thought was the right thing. I was naive for believing the right thing was notifying the people in charge so they would do the right thing. In my view, the right thing is holding Interim Chief John Kelly accountable for his inappropriate actions, not eventually promoting him to permanent Fire Chief. Since that has not occurred and it appears the new direction will be to divert and attack my family and me, I am informing the public so they are informed and can take whatever action they deem appropriate, whether at the polls or otherwise.

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