

COOK COUNTY SHERIFF'S MERIT BOARD

Sheriff of Cook County)	
)	
vs.)	
)	Docket No. 1947
Correctional Officer)	
Antoinette M. Garrett – Williams)	
Star # 14866)	

DECISION

This matter coming on to be heard pursuant to notice before James P. Nally, Board Member, on May 24 and August 22, 2018, the Cook County Sheriff's Merit Board finds as follows:

Jurisdiction

Antoinette M. Garrett – Williams, hereinafter Respondent, was appointed a Correctional officer on July 7, 1997. Respondent's position as a Correctional Officer involves duties and responsibilities to the public; each member of the Cook County Sheriff's Merit Board, hereinafter Board, has been duly appointed to serve as a member of the Board pursuant to confirmation by the Cook County Board of Commissioners, State of Illinois, to sit for a stated term; the Board has jurisdiction of the subject matter of the parties in accordance with 55 ILCS 5/3-7001, *et seq*; and the Respondent was served with a copy of the Complaint and notice of hearing and appeared before the Board with counsel to contest the charges contained in the Complaint.

As a threshold matter, a proceeding before the Merit Board is initiated at the time the Sheriff files a written charge with the Merit Board. 55 ILCS 5/3-7012. A document is considered filed, in this case with the Merit Board, "when it is deposited with and passes into the exclusive control and custody of the [Merit Board administrative staff], who understandingly receives the same in order that it may become a part of the permanent records of his office." *See Dooley v. James A. Dooley Associates Employees Retirement Plan*, 100 Ill.App.3d 389, 395 (1981)(quoting *Gietl v. Comminssioners of Drainage District No. One*, 384 Ill. 499, 501-502 (1943) and citing *Hamilton v. Beardslee*, 51 Ill. 478 (1869)); accord *People ex rel. Pignatelli v. Ward*, 404 Ill. 240, 245 (1949); *in re Annex Certain Terr. To the Village of Lemont*, 2017 IL App (1st) 170941, ¶ 18; *Illinois State Toll Highway Authority v. Marathon Oil Co.*, Ill. App. 3d 836 (1990) ("A 'filing' implies delivery of a document to the appropriate party with the intent of having such document kept on file by that party in the appropriate place." (quoting *Sherman v. Board of Fire & Police Commissioners*, 111 Ill. App. 3d 1001, 1007 (1982))); *Hawkyard v. Suttle*, 188 Ill. App. 168, 171 (1914 ("A paper is considered filed when it is delivered to the clerk for that purpose.")).

The original Complaint in this matter was filed with the Merit Board's administrative staff on January 3, 2017. Regardless of whether or not Merit Board Members were properly appointed

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during a given term, the Merit Board, as a quasi-judicial body and statutorily created legal entity, maintained at all times a clerical staff not unlike the Clerk of the Circuit Court (“Administrative Staff”). These Administrative Staff members receive and date stamp complaints, open a case file, assign a case number, and perform all of the functions typically handled by the circuit clerk’s office. Just as a timely filed complaint would be accepted by the circuit clerk even if there were no properly appointed judges sitting on that particular day, so too was the instant Complaint with the Administrative Staff of the Merit Board. Accordingly, the Complaint filed on January 3, 2017 commenced the instant action, was properly filed, and will be accepted as the controlling document for calculating time in this case.

Findings of Fact

The Sheriff filed a complaint on January 3, 2017 and an amended complaint on January 23, 2018. The Sheriff is requesting termination of the Respondent’s employment.

On July 7, 1997, Respondent was appointed a Correctional Officer. On November 9, 2014, Respondent was assigned to Division VIII of the Cook County Department of Corrections (“CCDOC”), located at 2800 S. California Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60608.

Officer [REDACTED] testified he is with the Lansing Police Department and has been for 21 years and his current rank is Detective Sergeant. (R. 22) He states he was working on June 14, 2014 in the Patrol Division and received a call from Dispatch to go to [REDACTED] to respond to an assault call by [REDACTED]. (R. 23) He discussed the assault charge with [REDACTED]. At that time, he listened to a phone call that she had on her phone. (R. 24, 25) The caller identified herself as Ms. Williams and in it she admitted she wanted to do bodily harm to Ms. [REDACTED] for having a relationship with her husband. (R. 25) She specifically stated she was going to kill her. (R. 25) After hearing this, he completed a case report with his Department. (R. 26). [REDACTED] did not speak to Respondent before June 14, 2014 (TR 27).

Officer [REDACTED] testified he is with the Lansing Police Department and has been for 17 years. (R. 29) Officer [REDACTED] states that on October 12, 2014 he was working his midnight shift on squad patrol. (R. 30) Around 1:30 a.m., he received a call from Dispatch that there was a domestic disturbance at [REDACTED] and when he arrived there he noticed a young lady sitting in a vehicle in front of the address. (R. 31) The woman there was the Respondent Antoinette Garrett-Williams and he identified her in the hearing room. (R. 31, 32) He had a conversation with the Respondent in front of Ms. [REDACTED]’s house and the Respondent said she had an altercation with her husband in Riverdale and that she came to this location because she believed the woman was having an affair with her husband and that woman lived at this location. (R. 33) Officer [REDACTED] did not notice any physical distress, bruises or injuries on the Respondent at that time. (R. 34) He asked her if she needed medical treatment and she stated no. (R. 34) He informed her that she needed to make a police report if she thought she was battered with the Riverdale Police Department. At that point he saw her drive off. (R. 35) Later that evening at 2:26 am there was another call at the same location for a domestic disturbance. (R. 35) This time he got a response from knocking on the door and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] answered. (R. 36) While he was speaking with them [REDACTED]’s phone rang and she answered it and

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the person on the other line said it was Antoinette and he heard a woman threaten to shoot out [REDACTED]'s windows and shoot and kill [REDACTED]. (R. 37) He later learned that this was Respondent Garrett-Williams. (R. 38) He stayed after the Respondent hung up the phone and continued to talk with Ms. [REDACTED] and Mr. [REDACTED] and the phone continued to ring over, and over and over again. (R. 38) At that time [REDACTED] wanted to press charges and he completed a report and they attempted to contact Cook County but could not get a hold of anyone. (R. 39) He further instructed Ms. [REDACTED] to contact the Lansing Police Department if the Respondent returned to her property and he codified all of this in the report. (R. 39) He would consider the call that the Respondent made to Ms. [REDACTED]'s phone a harassing call based on the remarks she made. (R. 43)

Officer [REDACTED] is currently employed with the Calumet Police Department but in December of 2014 he was with the Lansing Police Department. (R. 54) Ms. [REDACTED] reported that the Respondent Garrett-Williams had made threatening calls to her and she gave him the phone number. He went ahead and made phone contact with Respondent Garrett-Williams. (R. 58) The number he was given by Ms. [REDACTED] matched the number to Respondent. (R. 48) His purpose of calling her was to try to get her stop the harassing and stalking activities but she just screamed at him the entire time and he could barely understand her. (R. 59) The Respondent had no defense to the allegations and she just said "you can't tell me what to do. I can't call that bitch." (R. 59) At that point, the Department put on extra patrols for the protection of [REDACTED]. (R. 60).

[REDACTED] is the mother of Antoinette Garrett-Williams and she was with her in February of 2015 at the Markham Courthouse where there was a hearing for an incident between her husband and his mistress. (R. 63) At that point, she recalled her daughter being arrested by Officer [REDACTED] with the Lansing Police Department. (R. 63) She stated she was there for all of her daughter's trial and case hearings and that there was one regarding stalking no contact order. (R. 66, 67) She said that the detective told her daughter that he had a warrant for her arrest and that is why they were handcuffing her and taking her away. (R. 70)

Sgt. [REDACTED] is a detective with the Lansing Police Department for 14 years. (R. 73) On October 15, 2014, he was working as a detective with the Lansing Police Department. (R. 73) He was assigned to investigate the assault issues regarding Respondent. (R. 74) He was assigned to investigate the October 12, 2014 assault that was documented by Officer [REDACTED]. (R. 74) He contacted the Respondent by telephone and visited the victim. (R. 75) Ms. [REDACTED] reported to him that the Respondent had been coming over to her house and calling her on the phone dozens of times in a short period. (R. 76) Ms. [REDACTED] further reported that the Respondent had made threats to kill her. (R. 77) Ms. [REDACTED] reported that there were other threats made the Respondent at different times. (R. 77, 78) He reviewed several text messages and voice messages that indicated threats had been made by the Respondent. (R. 78) He was able to make contact with the Respondent using the same number provided by Ms. [REDACTED] that was attached to the Respondent. (R. 78) Ms. [REDACTED] eventually came into the Department and showed him numerous phone records regarding the previously referenced

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number [REDACTED] that belonged to the Respondent. (R. 81) There were approximately 53 calls during that time. (R. 81) There were another group of 11 phone calls during that time period. (R. 81) He called the Respondent to set up a meeting to discuss the matter with her and he met her at the Lansing Police Department and identified her in the hearing room. (R. 82) He provided the Respondent with her Miranda warnings which she signed and she still agreed to speak with them and he questioned her about [REDACTED] over the last several months. (R. 83) He asked her regarding the threats to break out [REDACTED]'s windows and the respondent admitted "that I was just going to break all of them out." (R. 84) Respondent denied making threats to kill [REDACTED]. (R. 84) The Respondent said that there was an Order of Protection against her and the Respondent admitted that she went to [REDACTED]'s home on October 12th. (R. 85) He then confronted her with the fact that Officer [REDACTED] and Officer [REDACTED] had heard the threats over the phone and she maintained her denial. (R. 86) She had no answer as to why she did not go to the Riverdale Police Department with the allegations that she had an altercation with her husband [REDACTED]. (R. 86) She was then questioned regarding her going to Ms. [REDACTED]'s house on October 19th and all the phone calls she made on that day. (R. 87) At that point she was charged with telephone harassment and released on an I-Bond and she was arrested. (R. 87) He was then made aware that there was an emergency stalking, no contact order put in place on October 23, 2014. (R. 87) He then testified regarding the numerous and continuing no stalking and no contact orders as well as emergency no stalking and no contact orders that were put in place which were Sheriff's bates 32 – 35, 60 – 61, 228 – 229, 57. (R. 88) [REDACTED] is the protected party in all of the Orders. (R. 89) He was present for Respondent's November 12th court date where both the Respondent and the complaining party were present. (R. 90) He was present when Judge [REDACTED] ordered no contact by the defendant with the complaining witness and his investigation revealed that she was violating this order. (R. 91) He learned that the Respondent had sent text messages to Ms. [REDACTED] referencing that she admits they are not supposed to be in contact but that she wanted to work things out with [REDACTED] in regard to [REDACTED]. (R. 91) He reviewed those messages that were provided by Ms. [REDACTED] and they were all from the same phone number that he had identified was the Respondent's. (R. 92) There were numerous messages that were being sent by the Respondent and he continued to investigate and follow up the harassment by electronic communications. (R. 92) At that point after speaking again with Ms. [REDACTED] regarding his continued investigation, he contacted the State's Attorney's Office, he was assigned to handle case and advised that the matter be brought up before the court on the next date. (R. 93) For the December 4, 2014 plenary stalking no contact order was entered which allowed it to continue indefinitely, his investigation led him to follow up with [REDACTED] regarding additional violations by the Respondent for continuing contacting her. (R. 94) Finally, he assisted Ms. [REDACTED] with a citizen's complaint packet against the Respondent on December 23, 2014. (R. 94) In early 2015, he received information from Ms. [REDACTED] that the conduct was continuing and there were additional copies of additional text messages associated with the same number and the Respondent made referenced to "fake ass" orders of protections and that the victim could take the messages to Lansing and to the judge. (R. 96) At this point this was an additional violation of the orders that were already executed in court. (R. 97) He learned of an upcoming court date and he and another detective went to the courthouse on February 2, 2015 and placed the Respondent under arrest. (R. 96) Prior to her arrest, he met with the Sheriff's Office and deputies in the courthouse and advised them what was going on and what was taking place. (R. 97) The

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Respondent, when approached, said she was not going to be arrested, put handcuffs on her and the whole time she was not cooperative from the courthouse to his transport vehicle. (R. 98) The Respondent was charged with violation of the stalking and no contact order in violation of a bail bond due to the fact that she was already out of bond for another offense. (R. 102, 103) He is aware that she was found guilty of phone harassment and received a one month supervision. (R. 103) Respondent told him that [REDACTED] was trying to get her fired (TR 105). He did not contact the phone company but when he called the number in question it rang to the Respondent. (R. 108) He did his search through the Lexis Nexis Accurint and the number did relate back to Antoinette Garrett-Williams. (R. 108) The police reports such as Riverdale and South Holland case reports all track that number back to the Respondent as well. (R. 109) He does not believe that [REDACTED] was charged with any type of harassing or threatening conduct. (R. 113) He did not believe the Respondent was ever listed as a protected party on any of the stalking or no contact orders. (R. 113) Again he did not need to contact the phone companies or any further investigation because [REDACTED] showed her phone and print outs and the numbers contained on there were the same as the number when he called the Respondent himself. (R. 114) He believes the person first associated with the phone, [REDACTED], was the Respondent's daughter. (R. 115) At some point he tendered his file to OPR. (R. 115)

Investigator [REDACTED] testified she is with the Cook County Sheriff's Office of OPR and has been employed there for five years. (R. 119) Her experience includes investigating officers who have engaged in conduct unbecoming, conduct that reflects negatively on the Sheriff's Office, conduct that includes breaking local, state and federal laws. (R. 120) She was assigned to investigate the Respondent Garrett-Williams' matter. She reviewed all the documentation, interviewed the proper witnesses, and gave all the proper notifications and notices to the Respondent. (R. 122, 123) She testified that OPR was notified that the Respondent was served with a no contact order in August 2014 and at that time would be de-deputized and the investigation would begin. (R. 124) The Respondent was provided all proper notification regarding the charges against her and she was allowed to contact her union and have a lawyer present at her interview. (R. 125) It was further advised that on October 22, 2014, the Respondent was arrested for assault and phone harassment and she was further made aware of the emergency and plenary orders regarding the Respondent and Ms. [REDACTED]. (R. 126) She reviewed all this information prior to her interview with the Respondent. (R. 127) She became apprised of a second arrest that occurred in February 2015 where the Respondent was arrested for violation of the stalking no contact order in violation of a bail bond. (R. 127) The victim in this case was [REDACTED]. (R. 127) She also reviewed police reports from Lansing, telephone records, text messages and Facebook messages. (R. 128) She also conducted interviews of both the Respondent and Ms. [REDACTED]. (R. 128) Exhibit 7 which is the tape of the interview was played at the hearing. (R. 133) Sheriff's Exhibit 7, the tape was admitted into evidence. (R. 135) Investigator [REDACTED] states that during the interview, the Respondent denied virtually all charges. (R. 136) The Respondent admitted during the interview that she was aware of the Order that Judge [REDACTED] had made and that she was not supposed to contact Ms. [REDACTED] but she still denies that she violated the Order. (R. 136, 137) The findings were that the Respondent was harassing and assaulting Ms. [REDACTED] and she based this on Lansing Police reports, telephone records, witnesses, text messages and phone records. (R. 137) Further she

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found that the Respondent was untruthful to OPR when she denied any of these incidents happened. She further was not cooperate with the Lansing Police Department throughout the course of these incidents and particularly on February 2, 2015. (R. 137) Further she found she broke state law when she was found guilty of the telephone harassment and her conduct was unbecoming of an officer of the Cook County Sheriff's Department. (R. 137) Investigator [REDACTED] states that the Respondent specifically stated in her text messages that she knows she is not supposed to have contact with Ms. [REDACTED] and that she does not care and she can take it to the judge or to the police. (R. 138) She specifically relied on the text messages that Ms. [REDACTED] sent her that were sent to her on January 4, 2015 and then those text messages were used in her questioning of the Respondent. (R. 139) The text messages again refer to the Respondent stating the "fake ass orders of protections." (R. 140) Respondent admitted to sending these texts but said that they were "for her husband." (R. 140) Respondent specifically violated General Order 4.1, 11.2.20.0, 11.2.20.1 and the Sheriff's Merit Board's Rules and Regulations, Article X. (R. 141) She also identified the Respondent in the hearing room. (R. 141) The text messages were ultimately admitted into evidence. (R. 144) Investigator [REDACTED] states that the Respondent corroborated all the text messages and she corroborated the number the text messages came from and she admitted in her statement that was her number. (R. 149).

Antoinette M. Garrett – Williams testified she has been a correctional officer for 21 years. (R. 151) Respondent admits that on June 14, 2014 she left a message for [REDACTED] where she "said some things she should not have said." (R. 158) Respondent admits that she looked up [REDACTED] on Facebook. (R. 160) Respondent made comments that the public could not see and made an issue of medication that had been stolen from Cook County. (R. 161) Respondent admits that in October she was angry and went to [REDACTED]'s house and that she met with the Lansing Police Department that told her file a police report with Riverdale if she had some sort of a complaint. (R. 166) Respondent admits that she did not go to Riverdale Police to file a police report. (R. 167) Respondent admits to continuously calling [REDACTED]. (R. 167) Respondent admits that she had a conversation with Lansing Police where she was told to stop calling [REDACTED] and the Respondent states that she did. (R. 168) Respondent denies threatening to kill or break out the windows of [REDACTED]'s house. (R. 168, 169) The Respondent admits that she was again charged with violation of the no contact harassment order and that she was due in court in February 2015. (R. 174) She admits that Lansing Police Detective [REDACTED] was the one who made the report and dealt with her contact with Ms. [REDACTED]. (R. 174) She admits she was found guilty for telephone harassment. (R. 174, 175) and she was being arrested for the violation of the order of protection. (R. 175) Respondent states that she does not recall stating I will kill you or you will never see my husband again before I hurt you to Ms. [REDACTED]. (R. 187) Respondent then admits it is possible that she said these things but she was very emotional at the time. (R. 187) Respondent now states that she does not remember and cannot recall exactly what she said but she may have threatened to kill her. She may have said she would threatened to kill her. (R. 190) Respondent was shown Sheriff's Exhibit 10, bates stamped 130 – 133 which are printouts from Facebook. (R. 192) Respondent admits it has her name on it as well as [REDACTED]'s name. (R. 193) Respondent admits to calling Ms. [REDACTED]'s phone on October 12th after an altercation with her

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husband and states she may have called 53 times between 2:11 and 9:25 a.m. but she thought she may have been calling her husband. (R. 198) Respondent checked into a rehab program for alcohol after the October interaction with [REDACTED] (R 184) The Respondent states that she does not recall calling Ms. [REDACTED] after she was told to leave her house in October by the Lansing Police Department. (R. 200) Respondent admits to sending numerous text messages. (R. 202) Respondent admits to drinking a lot during this period of time. (R. 202) Respondent does not drink alcohol anymore (R 184). Respondent admits that her number is [REDACTED] and having conversations with Detective [REDACTED]. (R. 202-203) Respondent denies that she told Detective [REDACTED] that she admitted to threatening Ms. [REDACTED] and threatening to shoot out her windows. (R. 205) On November 12th, Judge [REDACTED] ordered no contact between the two of them. She admits that. (R. 207) She admits that on November 13th the no stalking order was extended to December 4th. (R. 207) She denies contacting [REDACTED] after she had been ordered by the judge not to contact her. (R. 208) The Respondent states that she does not deny sending four text messages after the court date but states that she “don’t recall.” (R. 208) Respondent admits that during the phone calls she may have been screaming because she was upset about what was going on. (R. 211) Respondent states that she believed the text she was sending on January 4th, calling [REDACTED] a whore and a home wrecker she thought she was sending to her husband’s phone. (R. 211) She again states that she was upset and confused and thought she was texting her husband. (R. 211) Respondent admits that it is possible she may have texted that it was a “fake ass order of protection. (R. 212) Respondent denies being uncooperative with the Lansing Police Department at her arrest in February 2015. (R. 212. 213) Respondent admits to may have been drinking the day of court appearance and her arrest by Lansing Police Department. (R. 215)

Conclusion

Based on the evidence presented, and after assessing the credibility of witnesses and the weight given by the evidence in the record, the Board finds that Respondent violated the Cook County Sheriff’s Department Rules and Regulations, General Order 4.1 III Misconduct and serious misconduct, Gen. Order 11.2.2 0.0, and Cook County Sheriff’s Merit Board Rules and Regulations Article X Paragraph B.

This is a case where the Respondent was experiencing marital difficulties over several months and was drinking alcohol in excessive amounts which led to a serious lapse in judgment by harassing her husband’s mistress by telephone multiple times and making threats. While recognizing the personal stress that the Respondent was undoubtedly experiencing, her conduct was beyond the law. Unfortunately, despite police investigations and court orders, and repeatedly being made aware that her conduct was contrary to the law, Respondent continued on this course of conduct. While it is tragic and unfortunate that the Respondent was faced with these difficulties, as a sworn member of the Sheriff’s Office as a Correctional Officer this conduct was unbecoming and violates her duty to act in a professional manner and obey all laws.

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Order

Wherefore, based on the foregoing, it is hereby ordered that Respondent Antoinette M. Garrett – Williams be separated from her employment with the Cook County Sheriff's Office effective January 3, 2017.

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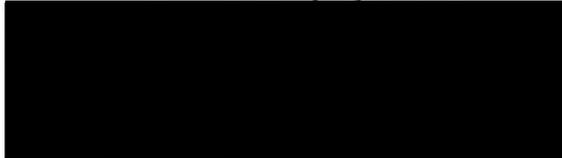
James P. Nally, Chairman



Byron Brazier, Vice-Chairman



John D'Amico, Secretary



Kim R. Widup, Board Member



Vincent T. Winters, Board Member



Juan L. Baltierres, Board Member



Patrick Brady, Board Member



Gray Mateo, Board Member

Date 12/20/18