

Patricio,

Before I respond to the substance of your inquiry, I first need to address two inaccuracies in the information that you've been provided. There may well be other inaccuracies, but I want to address these two up-front to ensure that you have the correct information:

-First, that two deputies left the bloodhound unit because of their disapproval of how Captain Bonnevier handled the dogs. This is absolutely untrue. For your information, Captain Bonnevier transferred from the Special Services Section to District 3 Commander on Sept. 11, 2010. We are a very large and expansive agency with many different divisions, sections and units. As such, reassignments occur on a regular and routine basis to meet the needs of the agency. Such was the case with Captain Bonnevier's reassignment. Had any other deputies left the bloodhound unit due to disapproval of Captain Bonnevier's procedures, common sense would dictate that it would have occurred prior to the Captain's change in assignment. This did not happen. Three deputies (Sergeant Joe Bryant, Deputy Chris Beatty and Deputy Tim McGuire) have since left the unit. But their reasons were all personal in nature and their departures from the Unit all occurred within 7-10 months after Captain Bonnevier's transfer. Despite what you've been told, this unequivocally demonstrates that their decisions to leave the Unit had nothing whatsoever to do with Captain Bonnevier. (BTW, Deputy McGuire submitted his notice of resignation to the Sheriff on July 8, and today is his last day.)

-Second, that Captain Bonnevier has been reinstated as a dog handler and head of the K-9 Unit. Again, this is untrue. Captain Bonnevier's position, assignment, duties and responsibilities with the Sheriff's Office remain unchanged. Further, the bloodhound unit is being disbanded. This was a difficult decision, but one that became necessary due to today's financial realities (More on this later).

With those mis-statements out of the way, here are the facts:

As you are already aware, there was an incident during training on September 1, 2010 with Captain Bonnevier's handling of one of the bloodhounds (I would remind you that this was not a Department dog, but rather Captain Bonnevier's personal dog that he paid for out of his own pocket). I will not re-hash the details, because you and I have previously discussed this incident. Essentially, it amounted to a forceful yanking of the dog's lead and an over-correction by Captain Bonnevier in response to his dog's failure to track correctly during the training exercise. A volunteer K-9 handler who observed the incident subsequently expressed some concerns to Sheriff Johnson, who immediately directed staff to conduct an inquiry into the incident. This was done, and the result was the five pages of typewritten notes that you've been given. Our initial concern in ordering the inquiry was that Captain Bonnevier's handling of the dog was described as somewhat rough. As Deputy McGuire notes in his e-mailed notice of resignation, he now views the incident as an over-correction caused by Captain Bonnevier's relative lack of time and experience with the dog. In this we concur. At any rate, by the time the inquiry was concluded, the decision had already been made to transfer Captain Bonnevier to a new assignment and therefore no further action was needed.

This now brings us to the present. As you may know, Deputy McGuire was a part-time Reserve Deputy. At the time of his hiring, his duties were two-fold: working in the Bloodhound Unit and also doing prisoner transport. Because the bloodhounds were a start-up Unit, we initially allowed Deputy McGuire at times to work in excess of the scheduled 20-hours/week. However, due to budgetary constraints, Deputy McGuire was recently told that he would need to cap his weekly hours at a maximum of 20 and also continue to serve in a prisoner transport capacity as needed. As you can clearly see from his resignation notice, this was unacceptable to Deputy McGuire and directly resulted in his decision to resign his position with the Sheriff's Office. As I previously stated, the notice was given in a July 8<sup>th</sup> e-mail and today was his last day.

With Deputy McGuire's unexpected decision to resign, a decision had to be made as it suddenly left us with two bloodhounds (being housed by Deputy McGuire) and no handlers. The reality is that we would love to keep the program. But with no dedicated handler position in the budget, it simply has become financially unfeasible for us to continue on with the bloodhound program. And with the loss of our handler, this was the right time to end the program. Accordingly, we've notified Tomoka Correctional Institution and the Seminole County Sheriff's Office that we have discontinued our bloodhound program, and both have pledged the use of their resources if the need arises. We will essentially go back to calling upon mutual aid bloodhounds, as we had always done prior to starting up our own Unit in 2009. Regarding the misinformation about Captain Bonnevier returning to the program, I believe this is the source of the confusion. With today being Deputy McGuire's last day, we had to retrieve the two bloodhounds from him because they belong to the Sheriff's Office. Coincidentally, Captain Bonnevier had recently had a very spacious kennel constructed in his backyard. For convenience sake, the bloodhounds were brought to Captain Bonnevier's home to temporarily house them while arrangements are being made to return the dogs to the 832 Foundation.

In closing, I would be remiss if I didn't say a few words about Captain Bonnevier. Again, quoting from Deputy McGuire's resignation e-mail, he referred to Captain Bonnevier as "a good man and admired leader." Again, we must concur. No one is without fault or mistake. But Captain Bonnevier is a highly valued member of the Volusia County Sheriff's Office with an unblemished record in his 33 years of service to the agency and the citizens of Volusia County. He is the utmost professional, and you would be hard pressed to find a more dedicated law enforcement officer than Captain Bonnevier.

Gary