



An Open Letter

To the Citizens of Shawnee

Michael J. Chitwood

As the former police chief of Shawnee, I have been following the labor negotiations between the city and the police department. I have carefully read the arbitrator's ruling, and I feel compelled to weigh in on the situation, because the City of Shawnee and the outstanding men and women of the police department hold a special place in my heart. As an administrator, I feel it is incumbent upon me to voice my support for the full pay increase that the union seeks.

I have witnessed firsthand the professional work ethic of the men and women of the Shawnee Police Department. They do an outstanding job for the citizens of Shawnee each and every day. A career in law enforcement is not for everyone. It takes a person with a certain level of character to even want to become an officer. Outside of the U.S. military, police officers are members of the only profession trained to run toward the gunshots. They also hold the awesome responsibility of saving a life, taking a life or giving a life. Furthermore, the police profession is the only profession I know of that on Monday, an officer can be awarded a medal for gallantry and on Wednesday, the same officer can make a split second decision that will be scrutinized by the press, the public and the courts.

As a police administrator, I feel obligated to ensure my officers get the best contract that the city can afford. Just as it is incumbent upon me to make sure that my department provides the highest level of quality service that the citizens demand and deserve. In my tenure at Shawnee, I worked diligently to ensure that both these goals were met.

In my career, I have dealt with an arbitrator on many occasions. Some cases I won, some I lost, some ended in a tie. The philosophy behind a neutral arbitrator is to overcome an impasse between the union and management. The arbitrator doesn't look at the personalities involved, has no vested interest in the outcome and only looks at the facts presented by both sides before issuing a ruling.

Again, the reason for this letter is the special place the citizens and police officers hold in my heart. Once the rhetoric is removed and just the facts are reviewed, you'll come to the same conclusion as I have. Give these hard-working professionals the increase the arbitrator awarded!

Michael J. Chitwood