

**STATE OF ILLINOIS
ILLINOIS LABOR RELATIONS BOARD
STATE PANEL**

Illinois Council of Police,)	
)	
Charging Party)	
)	
and)	Case No. S-CA-12-107
)	
Village of Sleepy Hollow,)	
)	
Respondent)	

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE’S RECOMMENDED DECISION AND ORDER

On January 14, 2012, the Illinois Council of Police (Charging Party) filed an unfair labor practice charge in the above-captioned case with the State Panel of the Illinois Labor Relations Board (Board) pursuant to Section 11 of the Illinois Public Labor Relations Act, 5 ILCS 315 (2010) as amended (Act), and the Rules and Regulations of the Illinois Labor Relations Board, 80 Ill. Admin. Code, Parts 1200 through 1240 (Rules) alleging that the Village of Sleepy Hollow (Respondent) had violated Section 10(a)(1) of the Act by interfering with, restraining or coercing public employees in the exercise of rights guaranteed in the Act. The charges were investigated in accordance with Section 11 of the Act, and on April 19, 2012 the Executive Director of the Illinois Labor Relations Board issued a Complaint for Hearing.

A hearing was held on July 31, 2012 in Chicago, Illinois, at which time all parties appeared and were given a full opportunity to participate, present evidence, examine witnesses, argue orally and file written briefs. After full consideration of the parties’ stipulations, evidence, arguments and briefs, and upon the entire record of the case, I recommend the following:

I. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

1. At all times material, the Respondent has been a public employer within the meaning of Section 3(o) of the Act.
2. At all times material, the Respondent has been subject to the jurisdiction of the State Panel of the Board pursuant to Section 5(a-5) of the Act.
3. At all times material, the Respondent has been subject to the Act pursuant to Section 20(b) of the Act.
4. At all times material, the Charging Party has been a labor organization within the meaning of Section 3(i) of the Act.
5. At all times material, the Charging Party has been the exclusive representative of two bargaining units comprised of the employees employed, respectively, as full-time police officers in Respondent's Police Department (Full-Time Police Officer Unit) as certified by the Board in Case No. S-RC-09-101 on April 5, 2009, and as part-time police officers in Respondent's Police Department (Part-Time Police Officer Unit) as certified by the Board in Case No. S-RC-10-099 on April 28, 2010.

II. ISSUES AND CONTENTIONS

At issue in this case is whether the Respondent violated Section 10(a)(1) of the Act by interfering with, restraining or coercing public employees in the exercise of rights it guarantees. The Charging Party maintains that Chief James Montalbano's interaction with Officer Nordan on January 12, 2012 constituted such an unlawful action while the Respondent denies that it contravened the Act.

III. FINDINGS OF FACT

A. Background

On January 7, 2012, full-time Officer Jerry Nordan assisted part-time Officer Dwayne Wheeler with a traffic stop of a vehicle during the midnight shift. Officer Nordan has been employed as a police officer in Respondent's Police Department for a little over 9.5 years, and he is the president of Charging Party's chapter representing the Full-Time Police Officer Unit. Officer Wheeler had been a part-time officer in the Village of Sleepy Hollow for about ten months.¹ Based on the arrestee's representation that he was 17 years old, Officer Wheeler initially completed the general incident report as if the arrestee were an adult. After the arrestee was released, Officer Wheeler learned from the arrestee's mother that her son was actually a juvenile.²

Pursuant to Sgt. Susan Wilson's telephone call the morning of January 8, 2012, Officer Wheeler came into the police station later that day to correct his report of the arrest from his prior shift. Officer Wheeler told Sgt. Wilson that he learned the arrestee was actually a juvenile after the latter's release. In addition, Officer Wheeler told Sgt. Wilson that upon informing Officer Nordan the arrestee was not yet an adult, Officer Nordan responded that he should not worry because it was only traffic. When Officer Wheeler met with Sgt. Wilson, she showed him the proper way to prepare an arrest report for a juvenile. Sgt. Wilson gave a note to the Chief reciting the information she learned from Officer Wheeler as to the age of the January 7, 2012 arrestee, including his statement of Officer's Nordan's reply. Following his meeting with Sgt.

¹ Prior to working for the Respondent, Officer Wheeler had been employed for over ten years in the Village of Maywood as a police officer and then a full-time sergeant.

² In Illinois, an arrestee's status as a juvenile rather than an adult requires a police officer to release him/her only to his/her parents or legal guardian. In addition, the general incident report which an officer in Respondent's Police Department prepares pursuant to an arrest reflects this legal character.

Wilson, Officer Wheeler complied with her request for a memorandum documenting the juvenile status of the January 7, 2012 arrestee and Officer Nordan's response to that news.

After learning of Officer Wheeler's account on January 8, 2012, Sgt. Wilson wrote and gave a memorandum to Officer Nordan concerning the arrest of January 7, 2012. In particular, Sgt. Wilson's to/from stated that Officer Wheeler had made her aware of both his mistake as to the arrestee's age and Officer Nordan's statement that he should not be concerned because it was only traffic. Further, Sgt. Wilson's memo to Officer Nordan asked for a written explanation why he, as the senior officer, did not make sure that the arrest was done correctly and fix any mistakes that were made.

On January 9, 2012, at 7:00 p.m., the Chief held the monthly squad meeting which members of the Full-Time Police Officer Unit and the Part-Time Police Officer Unit were required to attend. The attendees included Sgt. Wilson, Officer Nordan, Officer Jeffrey Fleck, president of Charging Party's chapter representing the Part-Time Police Officer Unit, and Officer Wheeler. Each of the attendees at this meeting received a minimum of two hours compensation although the Chief dismissed them around 8:30 in the evening at the end of the meeting. Other than the two officers who were scheduled to work, the officers who had attended the meeting were off duty at that time.

In the parking lot on January 9, 2012 after the squad meeting, Officers Nordan and Fleck confronted Officer Wheeler. In order to respond to Sgt. Wilson's memorandum, Officer Nordan asked Officer Wheeler what he had said to her regarding the arrest of January 7, 2012.³ During this same inquiry, Officer Fleck asked Officer Wheeler if Sgt. Wilson had ordered him into the

³ The memorandum which Sgt. Wilson had sent to Officer Nordan on January 8, 2012 provided that Officer Wheeler had told her that he, Officer Nordan, had told Officer Wheeler "not to worry; it was just traffic" when he learned that the arrestee on January 7, 2012 was actually a juvenile. See supra at p. 4.

station on January 8, 2012 to correct the arrest report from the previous day. Officer Fleck also told Officer Wheeler that he should receive overtime pay for that period on January 8 and could file a grievance if he did not. Officer Nordan told Officer Fleck that he would call him in the morning to discuss the situation.⁴

Subsequently, in the morning of January 10, 2012, Officer Wheeler initiated a conversation with Sgt. Wilson to complain about his questioning by Officers Nordan and Fleck the night before in the parking lot. In turn, Sgt. Wilson wrote a note to Chief Montalbano describing what she learned from Officer Wheeler about the incident. Her summary began with a statement that Officers Nordan and Fleck approached Officer Wheeler in the parking lot on January 9, 2012 “regarding Officer Nordan being written up for not supervising Officer Wheeler correctly on a juvenile arrest.” Sgt. Wilson’s recitation to the Chief also reported that Officer Wheeler had stated “he felt like he was being interrogated” by both Officers Nordan and Fleck. Her note stated that Officer Fleck asked Officer Wheeler if he had been ordered into the station to correct the arrest report for January 7, 2012, and that Officer Nordan had asked if Officer Wheeler had told Sgt. Wilson that he, Officer Nordan, said not to worry about the mistaken age of the arrestee because it was traffic. Further, Sgt. Wilson’s note related that Officers Nordan and Fleck advised Officer Wheeler that the Union had been called about the situation.

Pursuant to Sgt. Wilson’s instructions, on January 11, 2012 Officer Wheeler wrote a memorandum to her summarizing the January 9, 2012 incident which he had related to her. Officer Wheeler’s memo was similar to Sgt. Wilson’s note to the Chief in stating the inquiries which Officers Nordan and Fleck made in the parking lot the night of January 9, 2012. Officer Wheeler wrote that their questions made him feel “very uncomfortable.” His memorandum also

⁴ There is some overlap in the duties of these officers as union representatives for, respectively, the Full-Time and Part-Time Police Officer Units.

reported that Officers Nordan and Fleck said they would contact the union about the matter. Officer Wheeler's to/from pointed out that he always kept a "very far distance" [quotation marks in original] from union issues.

Article IV, Section 6 of the collective bargaining agreement (Agreement) between the Charging Party and the Respondent for the Full-Time Police Officer Unit provides, in part, the following: "on site Union representatives shall not conduct Union business during regular working hours except with the permission of the Chief of Police or his designee or except in the carrying out of certain time sensitive functions" In addition, Article IX, Section 2 of the same Agreement describes circumstances when members of the Full-Time Police Officer Unit may receive two hours of call-in compensation although the actual work time is less.

As of January 2012, there was no collective bargaining agreement covering the Part-Time Police Officer Unit. At that time, Respondent's part-time police officers received a minimum of two hours compensation when they attended a training meeting during off duty hours, such as the January 9, 2012 squad meeting, even if the meeting did not last for two hours.

B. Incident of January 12, 2012

Early in the morning of January 12, 2012, Chief Montalbano initiated an exchange with Officer Nordan at Respondent's Police Department. The Chief and Officer Nordan, the only ones present during the interaction that ensued, each gave accounts of what transpired.

1. Officer's Nordan's Testimony

Officer Nordan was exiting the bathroom when the Chief first spoke to him in the hallway about 6:20 a.m. on January 12, 2012. It was unusual for the Chief to be in the station prior to 8:30 or 9:00 a.m.. Officer Nordan complied with the Chief's order that he wanted to speak with him. After he and the Chief went into the squad room where they were alone, the

Chief began by asking if he and Fleck were discussing union business on company time on Village property. Officer Nordan responded that he did not know what the Chief was talking about.

The Chief then stated, "You and Fleck were questioning one of my officers out in the parking lot." Again, Officer Nordan responded that he did not know what the Chief was talking about. During this time, the Chief's tone of voice indicated that he was angry and hostile. Although not yelling, the Chief's voice was raised. He was about a foot and a half from Officer Nordan. The Chief then said, "You guys are pushing it" while pointing the index finger on his right hand about three to four inches from Officer Nordan's face. The Chief added that he did not want to see Officer Nordan's "fucking" face until 7:00 a.m. when the police officer's shift ended. The Chief also stated, "You and Fleck, a bunch of characters."

2. Chief Montalbano's Testimony

Chief Montalbano was in the station about 6:50 a.m. the morning of January 12, 2012. The Chief was there at an early hour because he allowed two hours to drive in traffic to a monthly meeting in Oakbrook which began at 10:00 a.m.. Upon seeing Officer Nordan walking down the hallway, the Chief told him to meet in the squad room.

Subsequently, the Chief and Officer Nordan, alone in the squad room, had a conversation. The Chief began by asking Officer Nordan, "Did you and Fleck speak to Wheeler about the report, about the Union?"⁵ When Officer Nordan responded that he did not know what the Chief was talking about, the Chief asked him a more specific question: "Were you and Fleck talking to [Wheeler] about the Union and the report in the parking lot after the department meeting?" Officer Nordan responded, "I don't know what you mean." The Chief also

⁵ At the hearing, the Chief clarified that the report to which he was referring was for the arrest January 7, 2012 when a mistake was initially made as to the age of the arrestee.

acknowledged that he “might have said” “you guys are pushing it” to Officer Nordan because he thought the two officers were talking to Officer Wheeler on company time and property. The Chief then said, “We’ll talk about it later. I’ve got to go.” The entire conversation took about twenty seconds. The Chief left the station around twenty minutes later for his meeting.

The Chief expressly denied being angry when he spoke to Officer Nordan that morning. According to the Chief, he just wanted to find out if there was any substance to the documents he was receiving from Sgt. Wilson about the January 9, 2012 incident with Officers Nordan, Fleck and Wheeler in the parking lot. In addition, the Chief testified that he did not intend to threaten Officer Nordan.

The Chief also denied other allegations that Officer Nordan made: 1) that the Chief told Officer Nordan he did not want to see his face until 7:00 a.m.; 2) that the Chief said that Officers Nordan and Fleck were a bunch of characters; 3) that the Chief used profanity; and 4) that the Chief poked his finger at Officer Nordan while talking with him. The Chief maintained that he and Officer Nordan were three to four feet apart at all times during their conversation.

In addition, the Chief described the dimensions of the squad room where his conversation with Officer Nordan took place the morning of January 12, 2012. He explained that the squad room was one large enclosure—roughly 50 feet long and 12 feet wide—with two partitions creating three smaller rooms. The Chief also pointed out that the squad room had multiple entrances and exits.

The Chief acknowledged that prior to this meeting with Officer Nordan in the squad room on January 12, 2012, he had read Sgt. Wilson’s note regarding Officer Wheeler being questioned by Officers Nordan and Fleck in the parking lot the night of January 9, 2012. Initially, he testified that he was also aware that Officer Wheeler wrote that their questions made

him very uncomfortable, but subsequently he testified to being unsure if he had seen Officer Wheeler's to/from describing the encounter of January 9.

C. Subsequent to January 12, 2012

Neither Officer Nordan nor Officer Wheeler were disciplined for their handling of the January 7, 2012 arrest. In addition, Officer Nordan was not disciplined as a result of his actions in the station parking lot the night of January 9, 2012. Finally, on January 13, 2013, Officer Nordan wrote a to/from memorandum to Sgt. Wilson in response to her memo asking him to explain certain aspects of the January 7, 2012 arrest with Officer Wheeler. In that document, Officer Nordan explicitly denied stating to Officer Wheeler that he should not be concerned about the mistake as to the arrestee's juvenile status.

IV. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The evidence demonstrates that the statements and conduct of the Chief at the meeting with Officer Nordan on the morning of January 12, 2012 violated Section 10(a)(1) of the Act. The Chief's acknowledged opening words to Officer Nordan—asking if he and Officer Fleck were speaking to Officer Wheeler about the union—provide the protected activity necessary for a violation of Section 10(a)(1) of the Act. Further, analysis of the meeting between Officer Nordan and the Chief on January 12, 2012 reveals that, under the totality of the circumstances, the Chief made an implied threat to Officer Nordan.

As a general rule, a public employer violates Section 10(a)(1) of the Act if it engages in conduct that reasonably tends to interfere with, restrain or coerce employees in the exercise of rights protected by the Act. Village of Calumet Park, 22 PERI ¶23 (IL LRB-SP 2006); County of Woodford, 14 PERI ¶2017 (IL SLRB 1998); Village of Elk Grove Village, 10 PERI ¶2001 (IL SLRB 1993); Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, 7 PERI 2019 (IL SLRB 1991); Village

of Romeoville, 26 PERI ¶29 (IL LRB ALJ 2010). The applicable test in determining whether a violation has occurred is whether the employer's conduct, when viewed objectively from the standpoint of an employee, has a reasonable tendency to interfere with, restrain or coerce employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed by the Act. Village of Calumet Park, 22 PERI ¶23; County of Woodford, 14 PERI ¶2017; Village of Romeoville, 26 PERI ¶29.

No showing of anti-union motive is required in such cases, as Section 10(a)(1) is concerned with the effect of such an employer's actions on the exercise of employee rights regardless of the employer's motive. Village of Elk Grove Village, 10 PERI ¶2001 (IL SLRB 1993); Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, 7 PERI 2019 (IL SLRB 1991). Nor is there a requirement that the employees were actually coerced. Village of Calumet Park, 22 PERI ¶23; Village of Romeoville, 26 PERI ¶29.

A threat in violation of Section 10(a)(1) need not be direct; indirect or implied threats have been found unlawful. Village of Calumet Park, 22 PERI ¶23; Village of Romeoville, 26 PERI ¶29; State of Illinois, Dep't of Cent. Mgmt Servs. (Corrections), 16 PERI 2019 (IL SLRB ALJ 2000)(citing NLRB v. Gissel Packing Co., 395 U.S. 575 (1969)). An employer's questioning or interrogation of employees regarding union activities may be deemed such an implicit threat if, under all the circumstances, it reasonably tends to restrain, coerce or interfere with employees' rights protected by the Act. State of Illinois, Dep't of Cent. Mgmt Servs. (Corrections), 16 PERI 2019 (IL SLRB ALJ 2000); City of Evanston, 5 PERI ¶2041 (IL SLRB ALJ 1989)(citing Canvas Int'l Inc., 288 NLRB 816 (1988); Hardin Cnty. Educ. Assoc. v. Illinois Educ. Labor Relations Bd., 174 Ill. App. 3d 168, 4 PERI ¶4028 (4th Dist. 1988)). Factors which may be considered in applying this test include the following: 1) the relevant background; 2) the nature of the information sought; 3) the identity of the questioner; and 4) the place and method of

interrogation. State of Illinois, Dep't of Cent. Mgmt Servs. (Corrections), 16 PERI ¶2019; City of Evanston, 5 PERI ¶2041. An additional factor to consider is the extent to which the employee being questioned is an open and active union supporter. See Sunnyvale Medical Clinic, 277 NLRB 1217 (1985).

The critical events of January 12, 2012 are not in dispute. Chief Montalbano acknowledges that he initiated the questioning of Officer Nordan on the day at issue. He admits that his only purpose in approaching officer Nordan on January 12, 2012 was because the latter had discussed Union business on January 9, 2012 as it related to the arrest report of January 7, 2012. The Chief acknowledged possibly saying to Officer Nordan “you guys are pushing it” in reference to their approaching and speaking to Officer Wheeler on company time and property.

As a preliminary matter, the Chief believed that Officer Nordan was engaged in protected, concerted or union activity on January 9, 2012. Even if the Chief was incorrect as to this belief, the Act should be interpreted to protect employees where the employer mistakenly believes employees engaged in union and/or in concerted, protected activity. See Lemont Fire Protection District, 14 PERI ¶2007 (IL SLRB ALJ 1998)(citing Salisbury Hotel, Inc., 285 NLRB 685, 686 (1987); Systems Analyzer Corp., 171 NLRB 45, 45 (1968)).⁶

Applying the factors enumerated above to determine whether the Chief’s questioning of Officer Nordan the morning of January 12, 2012 violates Section 10(a)(1) of the Act, a preponderance of the evidence demonstrates that such an inquiry a reasonably tends to interfere with, restrain or coerce an employee in the exercise of rights protected by the Act. First, the background of the present case reveals that this Respondent has previously violated the Act in its conduct towards this Charging Party. Specifically, in December 2012, Administrative Law

⁶ Accordingly, it is unnecessary for me to determine whether Officer Nordan was actually engaged in union or concerted, protected activity on January 9, 2012.

Judge Elaine Tarver issued an unchallenged Recommended Decision and Order (RDO) which concluded that the Respondent violated the Act when it removed two police officers from the schedule in its Police Department starting in September 2010 due to their protected activities.⁷ See Illinois Council of Police and Village of Sleepy Hollow, 29 PERI ¶102 (IL LRB ALJ 2012). One of these officers was Jeff Fleck, the same president of the Part-Time Police Officer Unit who spoke to Officer Wheeler along with Officer Nordan on January 9, 2012 in the parking lot. Id.

Two other factors—the identity of the questioner and the employee subject—contribute to the coercive impact of the Chief’s questions to Officer Nordan on January 12, 2012. The Chief of Police, the highest rank in the Respondent’s Police Department, was the person asking Officer Nordan questions about what he said to Officer Wheeler on January 9, 2012. The Chief had the authority to affect the terms and conditions of Officer Nordan’s employment. Further, as the president of the Charging Party’s chapter representing the Full-Time Police Officer Unit, Officer Nordan was an open and active union supporter.

Given this atmosphere, I conclude that the Chief’s questioning of Officer Nordan on January 12, 2012 violated Section 10(a)(1) of the Act by interfering with, restraining or coercing his exercise of rights which the Act guarantees. From the perspective of a reasonable person in Officer Nordan’s position, the Chief’s questions on January 12, 2012 and his statement that Officers Nordan and Fleck “were pushing it” sent an implied threat to Officer Nordan to keep the union out of any matters related to the January 7, 2012 arrest report or possibly face disciplinary consequences.

⁷ While ALJ Tarver did not issue her RDO concerning the Village of Sleepy Hollow until after the January 12, 2012 meeting at issue here, the events which gave rise to her finding of unlawful actions took place well before that incident.

The Chief's intent when he met with Officer Nordan on the morning of January 12, 2012 is irrelevant to my finding. See Village of Elk Grove Village, 10 PERI ¶2001 (IL SLRB 1993); Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, 7 PERI 2019 (IL SLRB 1991). Rather, the impact of his words is significant. Further, no discipline of Officer Nordan is necessary for the conclusion that the Chief's actions violated Section 10(a)(1) of the Act. See. Village of Calumet Park, 22 PERI ¶23; Village of Romeoville, 26 PERI ¶29 (actual coercion is unnecessary for a Section 10(a)(1) violation).

V. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Respondent violated Section 10(a)(1) of the Act.

VI. RECOMMENDED ORDER

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the Respondent, Village of Sleepy Hollow, its officers and agents shall:

1. Cease and desist from interrogating or threatening its employees, or otherwise interfering with its employees' exercise of rights guaranteed them in the Act.
2. Cease and desist from in any like or related manner interfering with, restraining or coercing employees in the exercise of rights guaranteed them in the Act.
3. Post, for 60 consecutive days, at all places where notices to employees are regularly posted, signed copies of the attached notice. Respondent will take reasonable steps to ensure that the notices are not altered, defaced or covered by any other material.
4. Notify the Board, in writing, within 20 days of this order, of the steps that the Respondent has taken to comply herewith.

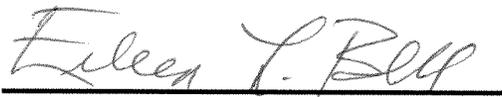
VII. EXCEPTIONS

Pursuant to Section 1200.135 of the Board's Rules, parties may file exceptions to the Administrative Law Judge's Recommended Decision and Order and briefs in support of those exceptions no later than 30 days after service of this Recommendation. Parties may file responses to exceptions and briefs in support of the responses no later than 15 days after service

of the exceptions. In such responses, parties that have not previously filed exceptions may include cross-exceptions to any portion of the Administrative Law Judge's Recommendation. Within 7 days from the filing of cross-exceptions, parties may file cross-responses to the cross-exceptions. Exceptions, responses, cross-exceptions and cross-responses must be filed with the General Counsel of the Illinois Labor Relations Board, 160 North LaSalle Street, Suite S-400, Chicago, Illinois 60601-3103 and served on all other parties. Exceptions, responses, cross-exceptions and cross-responses will not be accepted at the Board's Springfield office. The exceptions and/or cross-exceptions sent to the Board must contain a statement listing the other parties to the case and verifying that the exceptions and/or cross-exceptions have been provided to them. The exceptions and/or cross exceptions **will not** be considered without this statement. If no exceptions have been filed within the 30 day period, the parties will be deemed to have waived their exceptions.

Issued at Chicago, Illinois this 1st day of April 2013.

**STATE OF ILLINOIS
ILLINOIS LABOR RELATIONS BOARD**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Eileen L. Bell", is written over a horizontal line.

**Eileen L. Bell
Administrative Law Judge**

NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES

FROM THE ILLINOIS LABOR RELATIONS BOARD

The Illinois Labor Relations Board has found that the Village of Sleepy Hollow has violated the Illinois Public Labor Relations Act and has ordered us to post this Notice. We hereby notify you that:

The Illinois Public Labor Relations Act gives you, as an employee, these rights:

- To engage in self-organization.
 - To form, join, or help unions.
 - To bargain collectively through a representative of your own choosing.
 - To act together with other employees to bargain collectively or for other mutual aid or protection.
- And, if you wish, not to do any of these things.

Accordingly, we assure you that:

WE WILL cease and desist from interrogating or threatening our employees, or otherwise interfering with our employees' exercise of rights guaranteed them in the Act

WE WILL cease and desist from in any like or related manner, interfering with, restraining or coercing employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed them in the Act.

Date of Posting: _____

Village of Sleepy Hollow
(Employer)

(Representative)

(Title)

ILLINOIS LABOR RELATIONS BOARD

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**THIS IS AN OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT NOTICE
AND MUST NOT BE DEFACED.**
