

Police Department Falsely States Officer Was "Terminated" In Major Discipline Report - NJ OPRA Blog

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The New Jersey Attorney General has published a database of all of the major discipline reports that police departments have released this week in response to Law Enforcement Directive 2020-5. Although the AG is heralding the disclosures as “an important and necessary step to build greater public trust,” we are already identifying discrepancies. Here is another troublesome one from Lower Alloways Creek Police Department, in Salem County.

According to Lower Alloways Creek Police Department’s 2020 Annual Major Discipline Report, officer Jared Adkins “**was terminated** for incidents of Insubordination and Neglect of Duty.” Because that disclosure does not tell us what the officer actually did, we Googled his name to see if any news stories might reveal the details of the misconduct.

What we found instead are the meeting minutes of the Township Council’s November 16, 2020 public meeting. Those minutes state that, “The motion to accept **the resignation** of Officer Jared Adkins was passed by a vote of the Township Committee[.]” The Township Clerk subsequently confirmed in response to an OPRA request that Adkins “submitted **a letter of resignation** effective 11/30/2020, accepted at a meeting held 11/16/2020.”

Telling the public that an officer was “terminated” makes it sound like definitive action was taken against the officer to hold him accountable for misconduct. In reality, this officer was permitted to resign (possibly “in good standing”). Last year, the Appellate Division criticized an agency that told an OPRA requestor that a corrections officer was “charged with a disciplinary infraction and was terminated” when in

reality he was permitted to retire in good standing, despite the fact that he admitted to “engaging in sex with two inmates and bringing them contraband, including bras, underwear, cigarettes and a cellphone.” The court called it “inaccurate spin.”

Lower Alloways Creek Police Department’s major discipline report shows that other agencies are similarly involved in such “inaccurate spin” when making their major discipline disclosures. Unfortunately, internal affairs records are shrouded in complete secrecy in New Jersey, so the public has no ability to review the actual internal affairs files to see whether agencies are telling the truth in these disclosure reports.

Still, community members and journalists should review these annual discipline reports carefully, along with news articles, meeting minutes, and other publicly available documents to try to fact-check the disclosures. Please let us know if you find discrepancies or need assistance filing an OPRA request.

To view the blog post, [click here](#).