



A resolution regarding the City of Fort Lauderdale's dismissal of Larry Sciroto as police chief.

WHEREAS, on March 3, City Manager Chris Lagerbloom dismissed Larry Sciroto as the police chief of the City of Fort Lauderdale after the receipt of an investigation into complaints regarding reverse discrimination in departmental promotions; and

WHEREAS, Chief Sciroto was hired in mid-August following a nationwide search and came to the city with a stellar record culminating in serving as assistant chief of Pittsburgh with an extensive background in patrol, investigative, and administrative assignments; and

WHEREAS, Chief Sciroto became chief at an important moment in law enforcement in the city as work was needed to build community trust, bring accountability, and ensure fair treatment for everyone in interactions with officers; and

WHEREAS, the city had struggled with the issue of race and law enforcement for years, including the firing of three officers for sending racist text messages and videos and most recently with the decision to fire tear gas and rubber bullets during a Black Lives Matter protest over the George Floyd killing in Minneapolis, the grievous injury of a peaceful participant in that protest, an officer shoving another peaceful protester to the ground, and the prior police chief's public statements defending his officers' actions that day; and

WHEREAS, the Police Department also has a longstanding problem of a force that does not reflect the diversity of the community, either within the ranks overall or within the command staff in particular; and

WHEREAS, Chief Sciroto's hiring was met with widespread support from the City Commission, neighborhood leaders and advocates for reform and racial justice as an outside change agent who would improve diversity and bring fresh approaches to how the department addresses critical race and use-of-force issues and interacts with communities of color; and

WHEREAS, at the same time as the chief's hiring, the City Commission illustrated its strong commitment to diversity by budgeting for the creation of the city's first ever diversity officer and brought in outside experts to review Police Department policies and practices related to pertinent issues; and

WHEREAS, Chief Sciroto personally reflected the city's diversity as the first LGBTQ+ police chief and only the second non-white chief; and

WHEREAS, unfortunately, Chief Sciroto has faced strong internal opposition from reactionary elements within the police force who prefer the status quo and dislike leadership who did not come from within their own system; and

WHEREAS, Chief Sciroto made some poorly-worded comments during his first round of promotions; the promotions themselves illustrated no bias as women and minorities comprised six of the fifteen promotions; and

WHEREAS, the investigatory report that the city manager relied upon for his decision to remove Chief Sciroto is of questionable value in that he retained attorney Gregg Rossman on the advice of the city attorney even though Mr. Rossman is not an employment law expert and has a history of right-wing statements; and



WHEREAS, Mr. Rossman does not list employment law as an area of expertise on his web site and is not rated as an employment law expert in the attorney information database maintained by Martindale-Hubbel; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rossman may have conflicts of interest in preparing a report on Chief Scirotto because in his campaign to be elected state attorney for the 17th judicial circuit in 2020, he was heavily financed by current and retired law enforcement officers and police unions; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rossman made a series of questionable statements in the campaign, referring to his Black opponent as “a very nice kid,” saying the narrative of racial injustice is “too simplistic” and describing bail and sentencing reform as “misguided proposals;” and

WHEREAS, the Editorial Board of the Sun Sentinel commented on Mr. Rossman’s lack racial awareness, stating it was “bothered that he repeatedly stumbled on the word melanin, the pigment that creates Black and brown skin. He called it melatonin, which can put you to sleep; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rossman’s report on Chief Scirotto makes overly broad conclusions without evidentiary support; and

WHEREAS, one instance of this is that Mr. Rossman said “there is a very divisive atmosphere within the Department based on the perception the Chief is intentionally using race, gender and sexual orientation as attributes necessary for promotions” even though Mr. Rossman interviewed only 20 people out of a 726-person department, and the names of those 20 people were provided to him as potential witnesses to the underlying reverse discrimination allegations; and

WHEREAS, another instance is that Mr. Rossman said “the Fort Lauderdale Police Department has a strong history of diversity within the Department” despite the well-known history to the contrary and Mr. Rossman’s own data in Footnote six on Page seven showed the command staff is 72 percent white whereas the city overall is 45 percent white according to census data.

Now, therefore, we, the membership of the Dolphin Democrats, resolve that

- 1) The Rossman Report be set aside as of questionable value.
- 2) Chief Scirotto be reinstated to office and the city manager consider imposing less severe punishments for any missteps that he made, such as a 30- to 60-day suspension without pay and a requirement to be retrained in equal employment opportunity law.
- 3) The city look to the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for its findings on the promotional decisions and take any necessary action to align the promotions with the findings of the commission.
- 4) The city manager and City Commission recommit themselves to addressing the need to improve diversity in the Police Department and the issues of use-of-force and racial bias.

Passed and adopted unanimously by the Dolphin Democrats members on this 9th day of March, 2022.

Attest: Alfredo Olvera Alfredo Olvera, Dolphin Democrats President
Tina Jaramillo Tina Jaramillo, Dolphin Democrats Secretary