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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Three Valley City, North Dakota, city officials, and a police lieutenant, requested the Barnes County State's Attorney to investigate whether a letter sent to the city which accompanied an initiated petition to disband the city's police department violated state laws.

On December 7, 2015, Robert Drake, Lloyd Nelson and Tony Drake, submitted an initiated petition to disband the city's police department. This petition was rejected by the city auditor.

At the time the initiated petition was submitted, Robert Drake also submitted a letter to city hall alleging various unethical or illegal acts by three city commissioners, the city administrator, the city attorney, the police chief, and a police lieutenant.

Among Robert Drake's allegations:

1. City commissioner Mary Lee Nielson was involved in a "hateful" website to discredit three people running for local offices in 2006.
2. City commissioner Matthew Pedersen had a conflict of interest in the purchase of an apartment complex on preferential terms.
3. City commissioner Dewey Magnuson had a conflict of interest because he attended a tail gate party in Fargo hosted by the City's engineering firm.
4. Police chief Fred Thompson engaged in unspecified allegations of sexual harassment.
5. Police lieutenant David Swenson engaged in sexual relations while on duty, refused a lie detector test in a forgery investigation, and conspired with a woman to arrest her husband for DWI and drugs.
6. City attorney Russell J. Myhre purchased alcohol for minors.
7. City administrator David Schelkoph illegally gave an additional 1% pay raise to city employees, incorrectly claimed homes purchased for permanent flood protection could not be moved within the city, and improperly advised the city about frequencies for smart meters.

Mayor Robert Werkhoven and city commissioner Madeline Luke were not named in Robert Drake's letter.

Criminal defamation is a Class A Misdemeanor. It is a class C felony to threaten public servants to influence their official actions. Robert Drake submitted his letter making these allegations at the same time as he, Tony Drake and Lloyd Nelson submitted their petition to disband the Valley City police department. Criminal defamation is a Class B Misdemeanor.

Robert Drake, Nelson, and Tony Drake recently submitted a second initiated petition that was accepted in form by the Valley City Auditor. This petition asks to disband the police department and turn all law enforcement authority over to the Barnes County sheriff. This petition has been accepted for circulation to place it on the ballot in the next election.

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