

## Chief of Police Race Continues

This is the Fifth Article on the Candidates for Chief of Police

By Kat Rowoldt

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It's May 17, 2024, just 30 days before the citizens of San Angelo are asked to vote AGAIN on who they want the next Chief of Police to be. To be totally honest, that position will be decided by a very, very small percentage of the population that is registered to vote. Out of that very small number, an even smaller number of voters will have educated themselves on what each of these men propose to do as Chief to make the department better. Did you realize that only 6,639 people voted in the May 4<sup>th</sup> election? What power each of those voters possessed. Out of just over 70,000 registered voters, each of those voters represented at least 10 voters. I hope they voted the way you wanted them to for you, if you didn't show up to vote.

When I decided to do the initial interviews and article for the Chief of Police race, I considered the current Chief a friend, along with two of the candidates, Hernandez and Griffith. At that time, I had not met Cimino. I was totally at ease working amongst this group of friends. I would never have dreamed things would have gone the direction they have gone. I am now more filled with questions than ever.

In addition, I have been blown away with the number of tips and notes of encouragement I have received from current and former officers, along with other city employees, plus even citizens in our community. It seems there is a lot of unrest, unhappiness and people no longer willing to put up with the "good ole boy" system, that we all are aware of. Sadly, most of it did not surprise me, as I witnessed so much of it as I sat through the City Council meetings weekly for three or four years several years ago.

When the first article came out with the video interviews, I decided to push it out on Facebook as well. I did my best to try to keep up with the various threads that went out from it. Unfortunately, you cannot follow all of them because of various settings on the pages each individual has in place. But one thread did catch my eye. It was one where a lady was questioning what she had heard in one of the interviews because it contradicted a personal text she had exchanged with Chief Carter back in January. Thus, the digging and asking more questions was continued.

I pulled her screenshots from the thread and reached out to her via Messenger so we could talk. She called me while I was driving to Missouri, and we talked for a while. She was upset that either her friend, Chief Carter, or Lt. Hernandez in his interview had lied, because they both could not have been telling the truth. They were telling two very different stories about a very important topic; one I had asked in the video interviews: would any of the current Assistant Chiefs be kept in their current positions?

Hernandez had an emphatic reply of no, stating he had not made any promises to anyone about that position. Carter in his text with his friend back in January stated that Hernandez was keeping one of his assistants on board. The two statements did not match.

I soon learned my first FOIA (Freedom Of Information Act - Public Information Request (PIR)) had been sent to legal where it would eventually sit until the midnight hour to respond back to me that they had no records. I did a quick update on that - article three.

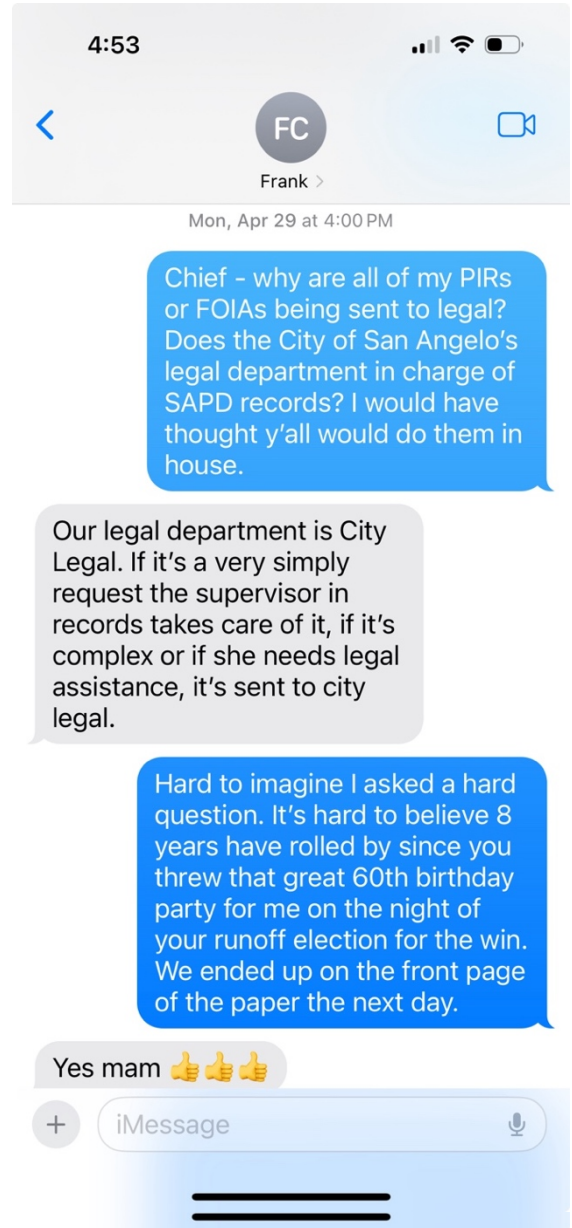
After I had a day or two to think about the response I got back from legal, I had to pen article four with all of my questions and thoughts about it (Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>). I submitted two additional FOIA requests on Sunday, April 28<sup>th</sup>, after publishing my fourth article, "Stray Bullets." On Monday, the following day, my FOIAs were immediately sent to legal before 9:00am as the business day began.

FOIA request #2 - Requested info on all 3 candidates to see if any of the candidates are using their assigned duty vehicles to attend campaign events which is against policy.

FOIA request #3 – a rewrite of my first FOIA request – still seeking information on the incidents where Hernandez was shot at while acting in the capacity of an officer.

Monday, April 29<sup>th</sup> – by 9am both FOIAs were sent to legal.

- 4:00pm – I want to know why my FOIAs are going straight to legal. I text Chief Carter to ask exactly that. **See >>>>** Our text thread also talked about deep sea fishing and the other work I do.
- 8:14pm – I received a text from Chief Carter. **See below.**



- Tuesday – April 30<sup>th</sup> – 2pm met with Chief Carter

I did look forward to meeting with Chief Carter who I considered a friend, who I had not seen in probably close to eight years, since shortly after he was elected and sworn in.

But friends don't lie to friends. I was about to watch Carter sit across from me and try his best to convince me that he was telling me the truth and not the female who had posted on Facebook. He wanted me to know what I had been given was from a text he had just exchanged with her a few weeks prior, not back in January. I knew better. He could not look me in the eye. He spoke quietly and low (almost under his breath) with his head looking down at the table - not at me.

I questioned him on it because the article stated the date was January 6<sup>th</sup>. He said he never read the article. He was telling me the truth, he said. We changed the subject and chatted for close to an hour, like friends do, but I knew better. He was not acting as my friend. He was trying to deceive me.

As I left there and drove home, I remembered something that a retired officer had recently shared with me about his time in serving. He was telling the story about something which had occurred while on his shift, and the key point to it was this. His fellow officer had lied to him. As law enforcement officers, they always honor and have one another's six (their back). But...if they are ever lied to, that respect is gone. I knew I had just been lied to, almost to my face, but he couldn't look me in the eye. It wasn't a good feeling.

I sat on it. The election came and went. There is now a runoff. We have two candidates: Lt. Mike Hernandez and Sgt. Travis Griffith. I was still waiting on my FOIA requests to be returned. I still had many unanswered questions, and even more things to "investigate" that various people have sent me. My plate is more than full without any of this on it.

This past week I received one FOIA back - and answered. Yea! They did wait until after the election was over to do the less than one hour work required on it. Someone must have a friend in COSA's legal department.

I had several people reach out to me who had attended various fund raisers and forums and noticed something that bothered them in regard to the candidates or at least one of the candidates. City policy states:

City Policy:

#### 6.01 Political Activities

An employee may not engage in political activities while on duty or in uniform during scheduled working hours unless the employee's job responsibilities call for such involvement. An employee may not hold an elected office of the City of San Angelo.

An employee may not use their authority, influence, or official position as a City of San Angelo employee to influence the result of an election or nomination for elective office. An employee may not directly or indirectly coerce, command, or advise any public officer or employee to pay, lend, or contribute anything of value to any person or organization for political purposes. City-owned facilities, personnel, equipment, supplies, vehicles, e-mail, or other resources shall not be used in or for any campaign or other political activities.

So, candidates may not use their assigned duty vehicles to campaign in, driving to or from, plus they are not to wear their uniform, badge and gun displayed either. I submitted it on each of the candidates.

Here's my FOIA and their reply:

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Subject: [Records Center] Police Department PIR :: P006905-042824

Body:



San Angelo Police Department  
401 E Beaugard Ave  
San Angelo, TX 76903  
Tel: (325)-657-4246

May 08, 2024

RE: PD PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST of April 28, 2024., Reference # P006905-042824.

Dear Kat Rowoldt,

The San Angelo Police Department received a public records request from you on April 28, 2024. Your request mentioned:

**"I would like to request information on any and all GPS locations for each City of San Angelo-Owned/San Angelo Police Department issued vehicles assigned to Lt. Mike Hernandez, Lt. Chris Cimino, and Sgt. Travis Griffith within a two-block radius of the below listed addresses within the specified times. Were their assigned vehicles at these events?**

**These are publicly recorded campaign events and NOT the employee's residences.**

#### Hernandez events:

11-11-23, 72 W. College Ave., 10:00 AM. City Hall.  
1- 3-24, 3015 Sherwood Way, 5:30 PM, the original Henry's.  
2-22-24, 25 W Twohig, 5:30-7, Leos Imports  
3-7-24, 1620 University Avenue, 11am-1pm, ASU Alumni Center  
3-12-24, 1925 University Ave., 6-7:30 PM, W. Texas Rehabilitation Center  
3-17-24, 200 S. Magdalen, 6pm, Old Central Firehouse  
3-18-24, 33 W. Beaugard, 6-8pm, Library  
3-21-24, 2111 Club House Lane, 6-7pm, Bentwood Country Club  
3-20-24, 1901 Knickerbocker Rd, 11:30am-1pm, Napoli's Italian Restaurant  
3-22-24, 1822 N. Chadbourne St, 2-3:30pm, Senior Changs  
3-23-24, 420 N. Bell Street, My Bar, 11am-2pm  
4-5th or 6th-24, 402 W. Beaugard, Angoria Hotel, 12pm-9pm each day  
4-25-24, 33 W. Beaugard, Downtown Library, 6:00-8:00pm

#### Griffith Events:

3-7-21, 1620 University Avenue, ASU Alumni Center, 11am-1pm

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**Griffith Events:**

3-7-21, 1620 University Avenue, ASU Alumni Center, 11am-1pm  
3-12-24, 1925 University Avenue, West Texas Rehabilitation Center, 6-7:30pm  
3-15-24, 12 E Twohig, Lego podcast 3-8pm  
3-18-24, 33 West Beaugard, The Library, 6-8pm  
3-20-24, 1901 Knickerbocker Road, Napoli's Italian Restaurant, 11:30am-1pm  
3-21-24, 900 W Avenue J, 6-8pm  
3-28-24, 8926 Hangar Rd, 6-8pm  
4-25-24, 33 W. Beaugard, Downtown Library, 6:00-8:00pm

**Cimino events:**

3-4-24, 315 W Avenue D, Conexion, 8am-5pm  
3-12-24, 1925 University Avenue, West Texas Rehabilitation Center, 6-7:30pm  
3-15-24, 12 E Twohig, Lego podcast 3-8pm  
3-18-24, 33 West Beaugard, The Library, 6-8pm  
3-20-24, 1901 Knickerbocker Road, Napoli's Italian Restaurant, 11:30am-1pm  
4-25-24, 33 W. Beaugard, Downtown Library, 6:00-8:00pm"

Good afternoon,

We were able to locate the below information that was responsive to your request.

Only two locations of those listed had any of the three units within a 200 meter radius of the address provided:

Hernandez - 3/7/24 1620 University 11am - 1pm

Hernandez - 3/20/24 1901 Knickerbocker 11am - 1pm

The San Angelo City Council adopted a policy at their December 13, 2022 meeting to enact Section 552.275 of the Texas Government Code,

After using 36-hours of staff time in a fiscal year (Oct. 1 – Sept. 30), you will be charged at a rate of \$15/hour for future requests.

No work will be done until payment is received.

The total number of hours worked on this request was: **0.52**

The total number of hours worked on all requests submitted by you since October 1 is: **1.68**


Sincerely,

San Angelo Police Department

Posted on Lt. Mike Hernandez's Facebook page for Chief of Police he openly posted photos of himself in his CID uniform with gun and badge displayed while attending a fundraiser on his own behalf.

While seeking the highest office in the police department, he is showing total disregard to the very policies he would expect his officers (and himself) to follow. Not a good start.




**Mike Hernandez for Chief of Police**  
 February 2 · 🌐

Thank you Camille Santry and the Suddeth family for hosting this Meet & Greet last week.  
 And thank you to all who contributed and attended, shout out to [Shana's Cafe & Bakery](#) for the beautiful spread & Frank Diaz for the HTeaO.  
 DONATION LINK: <https://secure.anedot.com/san-angelo-police-chief/donate>





Here's another example from his Facebook page, clearly in the evening, as I believe also the Ft. Concho event was after hours.

While the two hits that were returned on my FOIA where both at noon in regard to his vehicle, technically, by the book, since he was campaigning, he should have used his personal vehicle and clothing.

The other FOIA - #3 - second shot at the original question. They went beyond their FOIA MANDATED 10 business day response requirement. I received it back a few days ago. I will address this in a subsequent article.

Police Department PIR 14 days ago  
 P006906-042824  
 Status : Sent for Legal Review

  
**In Progress**

 **Kat Rowoldt**

Details

I wanted to do another video interview with each candidate. There seemed to be two things on each of their plates which needed to be cleaned up. So, let's let them speak directly about each of these situations.

I texted both candidates exactly what I wanted to discuss with each of them – so both saw what I was going to ask them and their opponent. As seen directly below (minus the comment in purple).

Hernandez

1. Let's talk about the eleven situations where you were shot at...
2. Let's talk about the assistant chief positions...

Griffith

1. Let's talk about the signage being out early situation...  
(a story that's floating around that was never true)
2. Let's talk about your wife's email to coworkers...

Bottomline – let's clear up these muddy topics.

*Hernandez chose NOT to respond to my requests to do an interview to discuss these topics. I texted him twice. He was given an opportunity to clear up these questions, but apparently has chosen not to. Does this demonstrate a total lack of transparency?*

*Griffith – met with me on Wednesday, May 15, 2024 in Santa Fe Park to do his interview. My apologies for my camera picking up the wind like it did and the birds adding their two cents too.*

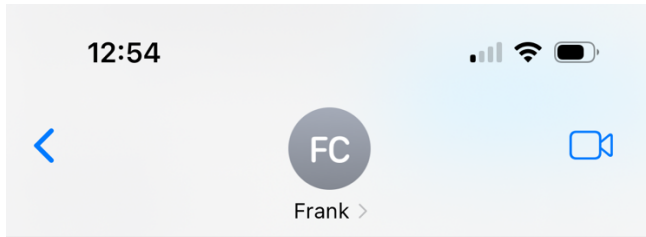
Here's the link to click: <https://youtu.be/IVEtLFqk03w>





Someone the other day around the dinner table made a statement that stuck with me. They commented that longevity and years of working somewhere just shows you are a good worker or employee. It has absolutely nothing to do with being a leader. If you want to find a leader, look for someone who others want to follow. Good advice. Advice our San Angelo voters should consider.

Saturday, May 11, 2024, I decided to reach out to Chief Carter and let him know I was disappointed that he had misled me when we met and to show him I have the uncropped text in my possession. I still wanted to know which of the Assistant Chiefs Hernandez planned on keeping, which apparently, he must know due to the words in his own text with his friend back in January.



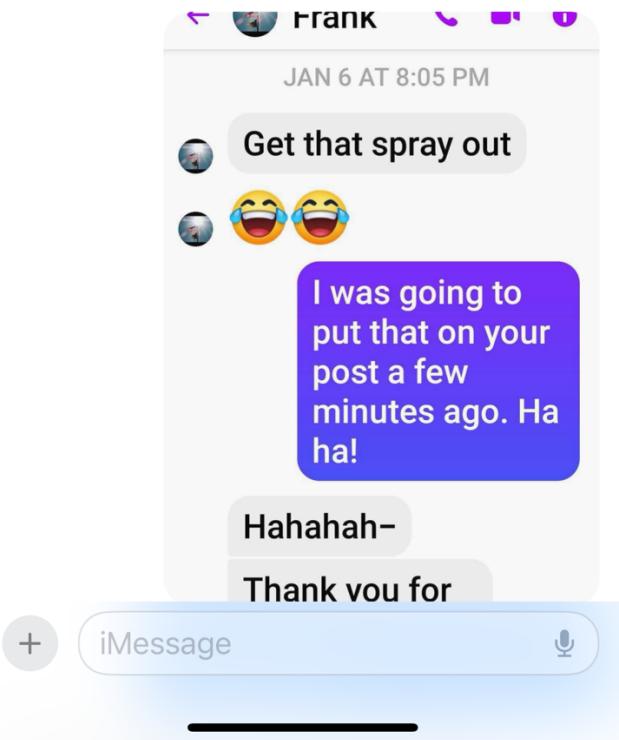
Today 12:48 PM

Well Frank, my friend, I'm disappointed.

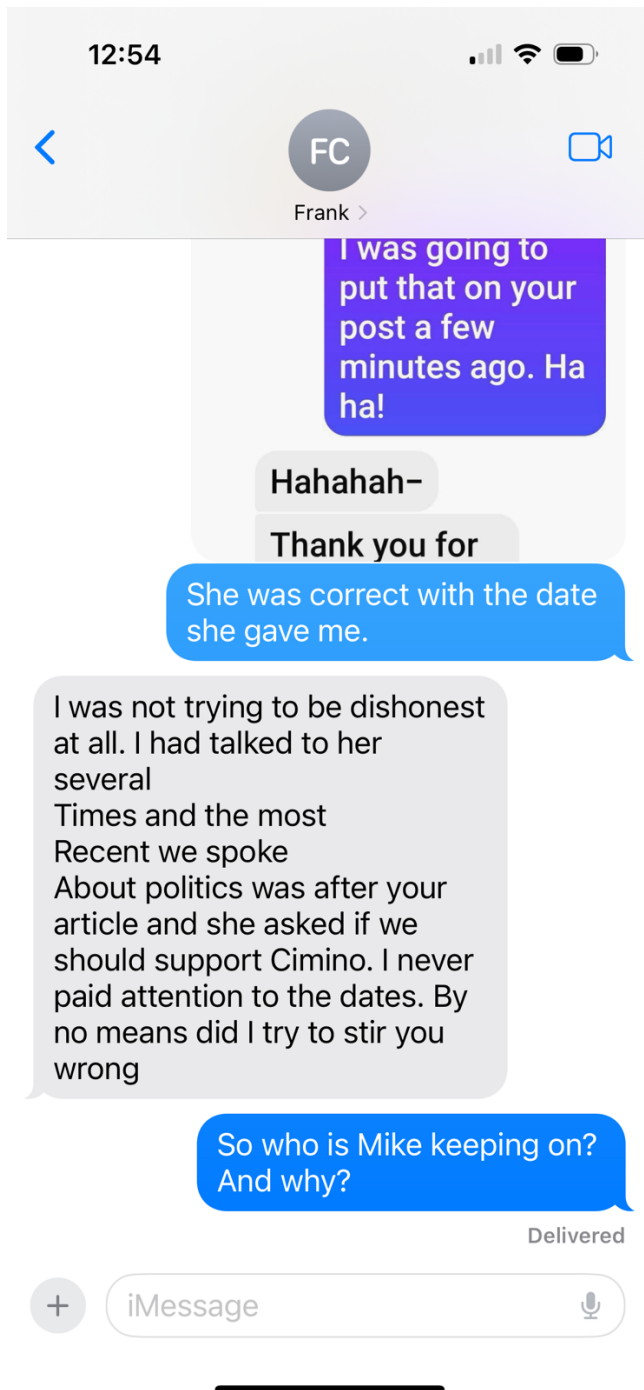
What you disappointed about

You weren't honest with me when we met and talked.

Sure I was



<<<< Notice date on text.



Texting stopped.

12:56pm Chief Carter called me.

After the call I had to just quietly sit and think about what Chief had said and wanted me to believe. For a second time, he was wanting me to believe he doesn't read and keep up with things concerning his department or himself. I cannot believe, and do not believe, Frank Carter, Chief of Police, does not prep for any meeting he is going to have with someone and debrief afterwards. If that is the case that he does not prepare, he is an irresponsible Chief. That's not who I voted for eight years ago.

Plus, Chief Carter pressed hard on me insisting there would be no more articles, that he's done, that he doesn't want to deal with any of this anymore before he hung up. Interestingly, he was trying to influence the media in what they should or should not cover.

But...Chief's last text to me kept bothering me. I went back to it.

**"I was not trying to be dishonest at all. I had talked to her several Times and the most Recent we spoke About politics was after your article and she asked if we should support Cimino. I never paid attention to the dates. By no means did I try to stir you wrong"**

So, does that mean he wasn't "trying," but actually was? Or does he want me to think he is such a Mr. Magoo that details about dates aren't important to him? If that is true, then none of this should matter to him.

So, the question remains. Who was the source of the information Chief was sharing with his friend via text? Hernandez states he has not spoken to anyone about the position. If that is true, then either Fincher or Howard are suspects. Fincher reportedly endorsed Hernandez back in March, based on a San Angelo LIVE report. Or is Chief doing Fincher a favor and he's behind it himself? Someone, or something, prompted the text Chief made to his friend on Messenger.

So, the elephant in the room has to do with the potential deal that was probably made eight years ago between Hernandez and Carter when Carter was in the runoff with Vasquez. If you remember, Hernandez, who had been close friends with Vasquez, elected to throw his support behind Carter so he could win. Today, Carter has thrown his

support behind Hernandez. Could there be strings attached to these good ole boy counter-endorsements?

What's the big deal about all of this?

Who cares if one or both of the Assistant Chiefs remain?

The men and women who serve under them care. As we heard from Griffith and Cimino changes are needed in the department. That change has to start at the top. I don't recall Hernandez bringing that up, but the other two mentioned it numerous times in various ways. The "good ole boy system" has been in operation for decades in the department. If you want to work graveyard shifts, buck authority by suggesting another idea or run against them in an election. Hernandez can attest to paying the price when Chief Vasquez immediately put him on nights when he chose to run against him. Others have talked about friends being chosen for special duty assignments instead of the best qualified. If a deal has been made to keep anyone on, the department and citizens need to know. It impacts how the next administration will get up and going.

One thing I find very uncanny is this. Chief Carter learned of his victory in the runoff race on July 2, 2016, which was my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. I have teased him about throwing a great 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party for me, but it was actually his watch party on that date for his runoff. I was in attendance, and I was the one who was showing him the final numbers that he had won when the San Angelo Standard Times photographer took the picture which ended up on the front page of the paper the next morning. The date the new Chief will be sworn in on and Chief Carter officially retires is Tuesday, July 2, 2024, my birthday. What are the odds?

...and so, it goes...

Sometimes LIES need a little light shined on them.

The TRUTH matters!

In closing, I'd like to make one thing clear, the original three candidates, Lt. Chris Cimino, Sgt. Travis Griffith, and Lt. Mike Hernandez all stated from the very beginning of this race, that when it is all said and done, they will still be friends, colleagues, and have



each other's backs. I hope this is still true. I'd hate to see any one of these officers that we are blessed to have working on our behalf to protect our community quit, get fired, or reassigned to the worst of assignments, which is known to have happened too many times in the past.