



Monroe County Commission

West Virginia

Kevin Galford, President
Kevin Mann, Commissioner
J. Melvin Young, Commissioner
Jeremy E. Meadows County Clerk

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, West Virginia Code §6-6-7 provides that any county officer, the term or tenure of which office is fixed by law, may be removed from such office for incompetence or neglect of duty; and

WHEREAS, West Virginia Code §6-6-1 defines the phrase "neglect of duty" as being the knowing refusal or willful failure of a public officer to perform an essential act or duty of the office required by law; and

WHEREAS, West Virginia Code §6-6-1 defines the term "incompetence" to include other conduct affecting the officers ability to perform the essential duties of his or her office including but not limited to having been the subject of a determination of incapacity, as defined and governed by section seven, article thirty, chapter sixteen of this code; or other conduct affecting the officer's ability to perform the essential official duties of his or her office.

WHEREAS, Jeff Jones was elected as Sheriff of Monroe County on November 3rd, 2020; was sworn into office on December 20th, 2020; and began his term of office on January 1st, 2021.

COUNT ONE

WHEREAS, one of the essential duties of the Sheriff of Monroe County is to ensure the collection, securing and retention of evidence from various criminal cases located throughout the county is conducted properly.

WHEREAS, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones has neglected the duties of his office or, in the alternative, has demonstrated by his acts that he is incompetent to perform the essential duties of the office of Sheriff of Monroe County, by virtue of the fact that Jeff Jones, or his designated representative, has failed to adhere to the Monroe County Sheriff's Department policy concerning the collection, preservation and security of evidence in the custody of the Monroe County Sheriff's Department. Specifically, the Commission charges, upon information and belief, that Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones, or his designated representative, has:

- from January 1, 2021 and up until June 2023, failed to keep and maintain an access log of all persons entering into the Monroe County Sheriff's Department evidence room.
- From January 1, 2021 and up until June 2023, failed to ensure that no loaded firearms were stored in the Monroe County Sheriff's Department evidence room. Specifically, on a date in and between January 1, 2023 and May 1, 2023, Sheriff Jeff Jones, returned two loaded firearms to the family member of a criminal



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defendant from which the firearms were seized. Sheriff Jones transferred the loaded firearms to the individual while inside the Monroe County courthouse.

- From January 1, 2021 and up until June 2023, failed to perform an annual audit of the Monroe County Sheriff's Department evidence room to verify that the evidence log is accurate and up to date.
- From January 1, 2021 and up until June 2023, utilized temporary evidence lockers which were accessible by the same key issued to each individual deputy.

Additionally, the Commission charges that:

- Beginning approximately June 1, 2022 and up until June 2023, the Monroe County Commission expressed their concerns regarding the evidence room to Sheriff Jones and his designated Chief Deputy multiple times in various Commission meetings with no action taken from Sheriff Jones or the Chief Deputy. Additionally, on July 8, 2022, the Monroe County Prosecuting Attorney met with Sheriff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hylton to review the Monroe County Sheriff's Department evidence room policy and ensure compliance therewith.
- During an investigation conducted from approximately April 1, 2023 and up until June 2023, the Monroe County Prosecuting Attorney was advised that Monroe County Deputy Sheriff's had relinquished control of several criminal investigations to the West Virginia State Police to ensure that evidence collected in major cases is stored in the West Virginia State Police evidence room to avoid potential litigation arising as a result of the failure to Sheriff Jones and his Chief Deputy to comply with evidence room policies.
- The Monroe County Prosecuting Attorney has advised the Monroe County Commission that the law requires him to disclose to criminal defendants, and their attorneys, the results of his recent investigation and his findings that Sheriff Jones and Chief Deputy Hylton were not complying with several provisions of the Monroe County Sheriff's Department evidence room policy. The Monroe County Prosecuting Attorney has advised the Monroe County Commission that such disclosure is likely to result in additional litigation concerning evidence stored in the Monroe County Sheriff's Department evidence room. The Monroe County Prosecuting Attorney has advised the Commission that he is unable to determine, at this time, what impact the failure of Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hylton to follow written evidence room policies may have on past and pending criminal cases.

COUNT TWO

WHEREAS, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones has demonstrated by his acts that he is incompetent to perform the essential duties of the office of Sheriff of Monroe County, by virtue of the fact that Jeff Jones, and Chief Deputy James Hylton, have demonstrated an inability to employ proper investigative techniques when conducting a criminal investigation. Specifically, on December 8, 2022, a citizen of Monroe County died as a result of a firearm injury. Despite have no experience in conducting homicide investigations, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones and Monroe County Chief Deputy James Hylton took the lead on the investigation of the case. During the investigation Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy Hylton:

- Failed to secure the possible crime scene.
- Failed to locate a second gunshot wound on the decedent.
- Prematurely released the possible crime scene and permitted a family friend of the decedent to clean up the possible crime scene thereby rendering it impossible for subsequent investigators to locate and collect evidence.
- The actions of Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hylton have placed an additional burden on the West Virginia State Police, the West Virginia Office of Chief Medical Examiner and the West Virginia State Police Forensic Laboratory in their effort to classify the decedent's death as a suicide or a homicide.

COUNT THREE

WHEREAS, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones has neglected the duties of his office or, in the alternative, has demonstrated by his acts or omissions that he is incompetent to perform the essential duties of the office of Sheriff of Monroe County, by virtue of the fact that Sheriff Jeff Jones hired E. Blankenship as a Deputy Sheriff after being made aware during a pre-employment background check that E. Blankenship had committed criminal offenses; or, in the alternative, Sheriff Jeff Jones has neglected the duties of his office and demonstrated by his acts and omissions that he is incompetent to perform the essential duties of the office of Sheriff of Monroe County by hiring E. Blankenship as a Deputy Sheriff without adequately reviewing the information disclosed during the pre-employment background check conducted on E. Blankenship. The Commission charges, upon information and belief, that:

- On or about February 5, 2023, E. Blankenship submitted to a polygraph examination as part of the pre-employment background check conducted as part of Mr. Blankenship's application to become a Monroe County Deputy Sheriff.

- During the interview conducted prior to the polygraph examination E. Blankenship admitted that he had received nude pictures of underage girls ages 15 to 17 years of age. E. Blankenship's admissions were documented in the report prepared and mailed to Sheriff Jeff Jones the week following the interview.
- On or about February 27, 2023, E. Blankenship was sworn in as a Deputy Sheriff.
- On or about March 3, 2023, Sheriff Jeff Jones appeared before the Monroe County Civil Service Commission to request the Commission to approve his hiring of E. Blankenship as a Deputy Sheriff. Sheriff Jeff Jones was instructed to submit his request in writing.
- Thereafter, on March 5, 2023, Sheriff Jeff Jones drafted a letter to the Monroe County Civil Service Commission in which he stated, "My reasons for wanting to hire Evan Blankenship is that he is from Monroe County, went to James Monroe High School and his goal is to one day be a police officer. His background check and interview was solid. His current employer said he is a hard worker. This career field is hard-to-find individuals wanting to do this type of work."
- West Virginia Code §61-8C-3(a), provides, in pertinent part, that: "Any person who, knowingly and willfully, sends or causes to be sent or distributes, exhibits, possesses, electronically accesses with intent to view or displays or transports any material visually portraying a minor engaged in any sexually explicit conduct is guilty of a felony."
- West Virginia Code §61-8C-1(c)(10) defines the phrase "sexually explicit conduct" to include "Exhibition of the genitals, pubic or rectal areas of any person in a sexual context."
- West Virginia Code §61-8C-3a(a) provides, in pertinent part, that: "Any person age eighteen or over who knowingly and intentionally produces, possesses, displays or distributes, in any form, any visual portrayals of minors who are partially clothed, where the visual portrayals are: (1) unrelated to the sale of a commercially available product; and (2) used for purely prurient purposes, is guilty of a misdemeanor[.]"
- Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones hired former Deputy E. Blankenship after receiving information during Mr. Blankenship's pre-employment background check that E. Blankenship had committed felony and misdemeanor offenses; or, in the alternative, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones hired former Deputy E. Blankenship without reviewing the information obtained during Mr. Blankenship's pre-employment background check.

COUNT FOUR

WHEREAS, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones has neglected the duties of his office or, in the alternative, has demonstrated by his acts or omissions that he is incompetent to perform the essential duties of the office of Sheriff of Monroe County, by virtue of the fact that Sheriff Jeff Jones knowingly deceived the Monroe County Civil Service Commission to gain the Commission's approval of his hiring of E. Blankenship as a Monroe County Deputy Sheriff; or, in the alternative, Sheriff Jeff Jones neglected the duties of his office and sought the approval of the Monroe County Civil Service Commission to hire E. Blankenship as a Deputy Sheriff without adequately reviewing the information disclosed during the pre-employment background check conducted on E. Blankenship. The Commission charges, upon information and belief, that:

- During the interview conducted prior to the polygraph examination E. Blankenship admitted that he had received nude pictures of underage girls ages 15 to 17 years of age. E. Blankenship's admissions were documented in the report prepared and mailed to Sheriff Jeff Jones the week following the interview.
- On or about February 27, 2023, E. Blankenship was sworn in as a Deputy Sheriff.
- On or about March 3, 2023, Sheriff Jeff Jones appeared before the Monroe County Civil Service Commission to request the Commission to approve his hiring of E. Blankenship as a Deputy Sheriff. Sheriff Jeff Jones was instructed to submit his request in writing.
- Thereafter, on March 5, 2023, Sheriff Jeff Jones drafted a letter to the Monroe County Civil Service Commission in which he stated, "My reasons for wanting to hire Evan Blankenship is that he is from Monroe County, went to James Monroe High School and his goal is to one day be a police officer. His background check and interview was solid. His current employer said he is a hard worker. This career field is hard-to-find individuals wanting to do this type of work."
- West Virginia Code §61-8C-3(a), provides, in pertinent part, that: "Any person who, knowingly and willfully, sends or causes to be sent or distributes, exhibits, possesses, electronically accesses with intent to view or displays or transports any material visually portraying a minor engaged in any sexually explicit conduct is guilty of a felony."
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- Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones hired former Deputy E. Blankenship after receiving information during Mr. Blankenship's pre-employment background check that E. Blankenship had committed felony and misdemeanor offenses and did thereafter submit a letter to the Monroe County Civil Service Commission in which he falsely reported that E. Blankenship's interview and background check was "solid;" or, in the alternative, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones willfully neglected the duties of his office by reporting to the Monroe County Civil Service Commission that E. Blankenship's interview and background check was "solid" without reviewing the information obtained during Mr. Blankenship's pre-employment background check.
- On September 15, 2023, following an investigation conducted by the West Virginia State Police Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones was charged with the misdemeanor offense of Deceiving Proper Standing to County Civil Service Commission in violation of W.Va. Code §7-14-18.

COUNT FIVE

WHEREAS, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones has neglected the duties of his office or, in the alternative, has demonstrated by his acts that he is incompetent to perform the essential duties of the office of Sheriff of Monroe County, by virtue of the fact that Sheriff Jeff Jones declined to terminate the employment of a recently hired deputy sheriff who Sheriff Jeff Jones knew, or had reason to know, had engaged in criminal conduct. The Commission charges, upon information and belief, that:

- on or about February 27, 2023, Sheriff Jeff Jones hired Monroe County Deputy Sheriff E. Blankenship as an additional deputy for the county.
- on or about March 28, 2023, Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hylton were made aware of a report made by a teacher at James Monroe High School that Deputy Blankenship had solicited nude photographs from a 17 year old female.
- After being made aware of the complaint Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hylton conducted an insufficient investigation into the complaint which essentially consisted of taking a written statement from Deputy Blankenship and the minor, speaking with the child's mother and the school principal and calling the attorney for the West Virginia Sheriff's Association. At no point during the investigation did Sheriff Jeff Jones consult the Monroe County Prosecuting Attorney or the Monroe County Commission.
- upon information and belief, at no point during the investigation did Sheriff Jeff Jones or Chief Deputy James Hylton review Deputy Blankenship's personal or work cellular telephones.

- During the investigation Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hytton were advised that Deputy Blankenship had requested nude photographs of the minor and offered to send her photographs of himself.
- During the investigation Deputy Blankenship admitted to Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hytton that he had exchanged photos and engaged in "flirty" conversations with the minor.
- At the conclusion of the insufficient investigation conducted by Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hytton, Sheriff Jones declined to terminate Deputy Blankenship's employment and disciplined him by placing him on 12 hours of administrative leave.
- West Virginia Code §61-8C-3b(a), provides, in pertinent part, that: "Any minor who intentionally possesses, creates, produces, distributes, presents, transmits, posts, exchanges, or otherwise disseminates a visual portrayal of another minor posing in an inappropriate sexual manner or who distributes, presents, transmits, posts, exchanges, or otherwise disseminates a visual portrayal of himself or herself posing in an inappropriate sexual manner is guilty of an act of delinquency[.]"
- West Virginia Code §61-8D-10(a), provides, in pertinent part, that: "Any person eighteen years of age or older who knowingly contributes to or encourages the delinquency of a child is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less than \$50 nor more than \$500 or confined for a period not exceeding one year or both."
- Upon learning of Deputy Blankenship's conduct the West Virginia State Police opened an investigation into the allegations made against Deputy Blankenship. The West Virginia State Police Investigation is currently pending.
- Deputy Blankenship subsequently resigned his employment with the Monroe County Sheriff's Department.

COUNT SIX

WHEREAS, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones has neglected the duties of his office or, in the alternative, has demonstrated by his acts that he is incompetent to perform the essential duties of the office of Sheriff of Monroe County, by virtue of the fact that Sheriff Jeff Jones knowingly and intentionally obstructed the West Virginia State Police investigation into the allegations made against Deputy Blankenship. The Commission charges, upon information and belief, that:

- On April 1, 2023, the West Virginia State Police opened an investigation into allegations that Monroe County Deputy Sheriff E. Blankenship had solicited nude photographs from a minor.

- On or about April 20, 2023, Sgt. S.S. Keaton of the West Virginia State Police served Sheriff Jeff Jones with a Subpoena Duces Tecum requesting: "Please provide the personnel file for former Monroe County Deputy Evan Paul Blankenship, including any documentation obtained before, during or after Mr. Blankenship's tenure with the Monroe County Sheriff's Department."
- On or about April 21, 2023, Sheriff Jeff Jones personally appeared at the Union Detachment of the West Virginia State Police and provided Sgt. Keaton with approximately 10 pages of documents in response to the Subpoena Duces Tecum which was served on him the previous day.
- Upon reviewing the documentation provided by Sheriff Jeff Jones, Sgt. S.S. Keaton noted the absence of any report concerning a polygraph examination which is given to all applicants for a law enforcement position in Monroe County.
- Thereafter, Sgt. S.S. Keaton determined that Investigative Specialty Services, LLC had administered a polygraph examination to E. Blankenship as part of his background investigation. Sgt. S.S. Keaton subsequently obtained a report of the polygraph examination on E. Blankenship from Investigative Specialty Services, LLC using a Subpoena Duces Tecum. The polygraph report reflected that Sheriff Jeff Jones had been made aware that E. Blankenship had reported receiving nude photographs of underage females on February 5, 2023, three weeks prior to Sheriff Jeff Jones' hiring of E. Blankenship as a Deputy Sheriff and nearly two months prior to the report made by a teacher at James Monroe High School that Deputy Blankenship had solicited nude photographs from a 17 year old female.
- On September 15, 2023, Sgt. S.S. Keaton obtained a search warrant to obtain the personnel file of E. Blankenship from the Monroe County Sheriff's Department. Upon execution of the search warrant at the Monroe County Sheriff's Department Sgt. Keaton discovered numerous documents which were not provided to the West Virginia State Police in response to the Subpoena Dues Tecum served on Sheriff Jeff Jones on April 20, 2023. Some of the documents which had not been provided were pertinent to the West Virginia State Police investigation, including the report of Investigative Specialty Services, LLC which reflected that Sheriff Jeff Jones had been made aware that E. Blankenship had received nude images of underage females prior to hiring E. Blankenship as a Deputy Sheriff.
- On September 15, 2023, following an investigation conducted by the West Virginia State Police, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones was charged with the misdemeanor offense of Obstructing an Officer in violation of W.Va. Code §61-5-17(a).

COUNT SEVEN

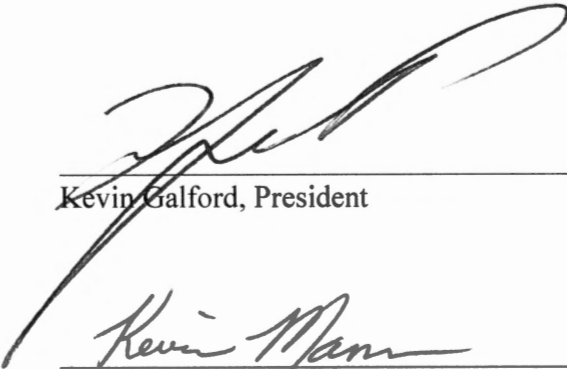
WHEREAS, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones has neglected the duties of his office or, in the alternative, has demonstrated by his acts that he is incompetent to perform the essential duties of the office of Sheriff of Monroe County, by virtue of the fact that Sheriff Jeff Jones failed to report to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources a child known, or suspected to be sexually assaulted or abused, or being subjected to conditions that are likely to result in sexual abuse or assault. The Commission charges, upon information and belief, that:

- Jeff Jones was elected as Sheriff of Monroe County on November 3rd, 2020; was sworn into office on December 20th, 2020; and began his term of office on January 1st, 2021.
- W.Va. Code §49-2-803(a), provides, in pertinent part, that: " Any medical, dental, or mental health professional, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer, school teacher or other school personnel, social service worker, child care or foster care worker, emergency medical services personnel, peace officer or law-enforcement official, humane officer, member of the clergy, circuit court judge, family court judge, employee of the Division of Juvenile Services, magistrate, youth camp administrator or counselor, employee, coach or volunteer of an entity that provides organized activities for children, or commercial film or photographic print processor who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is neglected or abused, including sexual abuse or sexual assault, or observes the child being subjected to conditions that are likely to result in abuse or neglect shall immediately, and not more than 24 hours after suspecting this abuse or neglect, report the circumstances to the Department of Health and Human Resources."
- on or about March 28, 2023, Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hylton were made aware of a report made by a teacher at James Monroe High School that Deputy E. Blankenship had solicited nude photographs from a 17 year old female.
- After being made aware of the complaint Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hylton conducted an investigation into the complaint.
- During the investigation Sheriff Jeff Jones and Chief Deputy James Hytton were advised that Deputy Blankenship had requested nude photographs of the minor and offered to send her photographs of himself.
- At no point after being advised that a minor was being subjected to conditions which were likely to result in abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse or sexual assault, did Sheriff Jeff Jones, or Chief Deputy James Hylton, who were both mandatory reporters pursuant to W. Va. Code §49-2-803(a), make a report of suspected child abuse or neglect to the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources as require by W.Va. Code §49-2-803(a).

- On September 15, 2023, following an investigation conducted by the West Virginia State Police, Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones was charged with the misdemeanor offense of Failure to Report, in violation of W.Va. Code §49-2-812.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED AND ORDERED that the Monroe County Commission, by the authority granted in West Virginia Code §6-6-7, and for the reasons specifically addressed herein, does allege and charge that Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones has neglected the duties of his office or, in the alternative, has demonstrated by his acts that he is incompetent to perform the essential duties of the office of Sheriff of Monroe County, and does adopt and pass this RESOLUTION to begin the process of removing Monroe County Sheriff Jeff Jones from office.

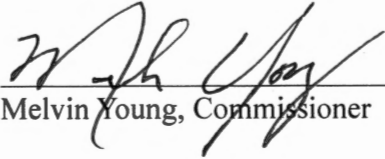
ADOPTED THIS 26TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2023



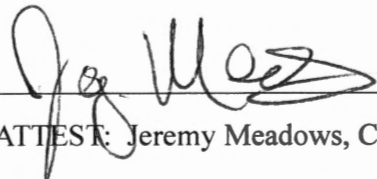
Kevin Galford, President



Kevin Mann, Commissioner



Melvin Young, Commissioner



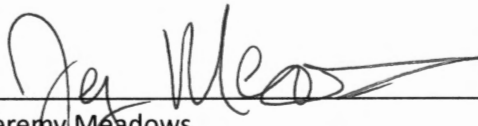
ATTEST: Jeremy Meadows, County Clerk

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
COUNTY OF MONROE

I, Jeremy Meadows Clerk of the Monroe County Commission, do hereby certify that the foregoing writing is true and that I was present when the Commission voted unanimously to adopt the Resolution starting the removal of Sheriff Jeff Jones.

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me on **Thursday, October 26th, 2023**.





Jeremy Meadows
Clerk of the Monroe County Commission