

My Law Enforcement Career and Leadership Experience

Adam Gunderson | Response to questions raised in Mr. Broden's letter

Mr. Broden raises questions about the number of law enforcement agencies I have been associated with and what he describes as a lack of increased responsibility based on the size of the communities I have served. Those observations leave out important context about my career and the choices my family and I made.

After graduating from law enforcement school, I worked part-time positions with Perham and Henning, neighboring communities where opportunities were available. I worked for Perham from approximately April 2001 through March 2005 and Henning from approximately December 2001 through March 2005. These positions overlapped; they were not successive moves from one department to another. I also briefly worked for the City of Battle Lake, but that position ultimately was not the right fit, and I moved on to other opportunities.

During those early years, we knew I would be deploying to Bosnia, so we stayed near my wife's hometown rather than relocating for a full-time position before that deployment. After returning from Bosnia, I applied for full-time law enforcement positions wherever opportunities were available and accepted the police chief position in Royalton. The very weekend we were moving there, I learned I would be deploying to Iraq.

I served as Royalton's police chief for approximately 14 years. My career progressed from early part-time law enforcement work to leading a police department. My early employment history should be understood in the context of overlapping positions, available full-time opportunities, and my military deployments.

After many years in Royalton, we wanted to move closer to home and family. When the chief position opened in Menahga, I applied with the intention of staying there until retirement. Unfortunately, challenges within city government led me to reconsider that plan and explore other opportunities.

Mr. Broden also includes Clearbrook in his count of agencies. Although I was placed on Clearbrook's roster, I did not actually perform work for that department. A roster listing does not, by itself, tell the full story of someone's service or employment. That distinction should be made when discussing my career history.

My family and I have valued living near family and serving smaller communities. Throughout my career, I have sought to grow as an officer and a leader while serving those communities. The size of a community does not, by itself, describe the responsibilities of its police chief. My experience should be evaluated by the duties I have carried out and the leadership I have provided.

In a small department, the chief often handles duties that larger agencies assign to separate supervisors or specialized staff: budgeting, personnel, training, policy, compliance, equipment, investigations, and calls for service. Small-town chiefs frequently wear many hats because staffing is limited.

Mr. Broden also notes that I applied for the Fosston police chief position while serving in Menahga. Considering another employment opportunity is not unusual and does not, by itself, establish anything negative about my leadership or performance. That application was consistent with our interest in living closer to family.

My career choices reflected the opportunities available, military service, family priorities, and a commitment to serving smaller communities. My qualifications should be evaluated by the responsibilities I have held and how I carried them out, not simply by counting agencies or comparing city populations.