

From: [W Lee](#)
To: [City of Madison Police and Fire Commission](#)
Subject: Chief of Police Selection
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Honorable Members of the Police and Fire Commission,

Firstly, I apologize for the informal format and the delay in contacting you. I have intended for some time to write you regarding this selection, but time has gotten away from me because of unfortunate life circumstances. I am thankful that final selections have not yet been made, and I hope that you will consider my input in making your final decision.

Now to my point:

In January of this year, I experienced the worst nightmare of any cop's wife: I got pulled out of work and told that I needed to contact my husband's captain immediately. He had a medical event at work, and they were attempting lifesaving measures. Tragically, they were unsuccessful. On January 13, 2025 at 2:06 p.m., Detective Erik Lee, beloved father, husband, son, friend, coworker, officer, trainer, was pronounced dead at UW Hospital.

The events that immediately followed are still foggy to me. So many fellow detectives, officers, and command staff were on hand to provide unending support. Yet, I never heard from the chief at that time, who, for whatever reason, limited his involvement to sending a department-wide email and walking away from it all.

But then, soon-to-be Acting Chief John Patterson reached out. He showed sincere compassion and sadness over the loss of Erik. He spoke with me at length. This was no phone call of formality; this was a true leader, reassuring me that my family and Erik's family in law enforcement would be taken care of in this, our greatest time of need.

Looking back now, just over six months from this awful event, I can tell you that Acting Chief Patterson was true to his word. This man has gone above and beyond for my family and for every affected member of the department, sworn and civilian.

I don't even know where to begin.

On the day all of this happened, Acting Chief Patterson was at Erik's district station, providing support and resources for the officers who were directly involved with the incident. He didn't just delegate this out; he cared enough to be there. He met with my family, me, and some of Erik's closest coworkers when Erik was taken to the funeral home. He wasn't there for show. He quietly stood in the back and simply held space and presence for those who needed it. He wanted us all to know that the department, represented by him, was supporting us fully. He called and texted, but always noted that he never wanted to be intrusive, and reminded me to contact him if I needed any help. When I had questions on paperwork and procedures, he responded immediately and got answers for me. He made sure that every detail was handled. He provided unyielding support for Erik's coworkers in the department, for those involved and affected, and assisting with arrangements. From the feedback I heard, every last person was

made to feel like a human with emotions, suffering a tragedy and still working through it, but doing so with grace and understanding that came from the top down.

Acting Chief Patterson did me the great honor of speaking at Erik's service. He did no canned speech or basic eulogy. He knew Erik and spoke of the person he was. He reviewed Erik's file, noting his letters of commendation. He put his heart into every word. This is something that only someone with his time, experience, and dedication with this department could do. And it meant the world to us all in our grieving.

Despite his busy schedule, he continues to check on the boys and me. He always wants to know if we need help or if he can do anything else. He reminds me that Erik's memory is alive and well in the department every day and will remain. This isn't political. This isn't an obligation. This is a real leader who cares about actual people.

I have been in this "business" for almost 30 years, having started as a dispatcher in Fitchburg, moving to Dane County 911 for about a decade, and finally landing in the DA's office. Erik was an officer for over 20 years. I've seen many chiefs come and go. I've seen the politicians. I've seen the failed outside hires. I've seen the alleged "good guy" for the officers who was all talk and no action when he was really needed. I have never seen a chief whose entire heart and soul is dedicated to the department, its people, and the community like Acting Chief Patterson.

In the time since our incident, I have watched him handle so many other challenging cases and incidents on the public stage. When he does so, he does it with the same caring and sincerity as he handled our family. This is nothing performative; this is just the person he is. To squander the opportunity to have him lead the department would be an utter shame and a disservice to the city, its citizens, and the people who proudly serve under him in these challenging times. He is the person who has earned this position, and he is the person that we all need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Wendy Lee