

# Rye Police Association, Inc.

CITY OF RYE

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## **RYE POLICE COMMISSIONER CONNORS AND CITY MANAGER OP SHEW RECEIVE VOTES OF NO CONFIDENCE FROM THE RYE PBA**

On April 30, 2008 the Rye Police Association held a Special Meeting. More than 3/4 of the membership, including Police Officers and Supervisors, voted unanimously to give Commissioner Connors a Vote of "No Confidence" to lead the members of the Rye Police Department. Another vote was taken and all the members voted unanimously in favor of having "No Confidence" in City Manager OP Shew's service and commitment to the citizens of Rye and to the employees of the City of Rye Police Department.

Our message to Commissioner Connors is clear and unwavering. "You have alienated your officers" and there are undoubtedly multiple reasons as to how. This unanimous vote was not the action of a few disaffected members, but rather represents a true accounting of the opinions of the Rye Police Association as a whole. Members of the Rye Police Association attributed this "Vote of No Confidence" to Connors' inadequate leadership, incompetence and mismanagement as well as his inflexibility, autocratic self absorbed demeanor, condescension, deception, manipulation and politically driven behavior.

Connors and City Manager OP Shew have refused to acknowledge the Rye Police Association and our leadership as the sole representative of all sworn members of the department in all matters pertaining to our working conditions. They have continually circumvented the union while placing our members in harms way numerous times. They have forced us to go to court and seek other legal remedies on what should be routine matters. This is intentionally done to harass and intimidate union officials. These improper practices that are forced upon our union has needlessly cost the Rye taxpayers well in excess of \$1,000,000 in legal fees while also bringing morale to a critically low level.

Connors has violated our member's rights and has suppressed union participation by conducting frivolous and petty investigations into those who have spoken out about his incompetence and mismanagement. Connors has selectively abused the investigation process against certain members while overlooking serious violations committed by members of his administration.

The Rye PBA complained to Connors and Shew numerous times since August of 2007 as to the holding cell being out of service. The holding cell plays a vital part in our daily operations. We also complained numerous times about the women's and men's jail cells being blocked and other dangerous conditions concerning the detention areas that was causing a significant risk of serious injury to our members and to any detainees. All of our pleas to Connors and Shew were ignored while our members were needlessly placed in harms way by Connors and Shew's incompetence, misconduct and mismanagement. After being ignored for seven months and shortly after the detention of numerous sex sting suspects placed our member's safety as well as the safety of the public in serious jeopardy, the Rye PBA submitted several complaints to the New York State Corrections Commission in March of 2008. The Commission came to the Rye Police headquarters and performed an inspection based on our complaints. The Commission confirmed our complaints and ordered Connors to immediately correct the dangerous conditions. The Commission also ordered Connors to stop dangerously blocking the entrance/exit to the prisoner transport area every day with his City of Rye provided vehicle, which the Rye PBA had brought to his attention numerous times to no avail.

Connors and OP Shew have also placed our safety and the safety of the public in jeopardy in their handling of our Police headquarters building. While we suspected our members were falling ill due to a serious mold and airborne pathogen problem that we reported numerous times to them, they ignored all of our pleas and refused to have the building tested. The Rye PBA paid an expert to come in and test the air in our building. The expert confirmed what we suspected all along; there was a serious mold and airborne pathogen problem within Rye Police H.Q. Our members were getting sick and the members of the public were needlessly placed in harms way because of Connors' and OP Shew's incompetence, mismanagement and misconduct. Several months ago toxic fumes were released into the ventilation system forcing two of our members being rushed to the hospital. A member of the Rye PBA Executive Board responded to check on the condition of the two members. It became very evident that negligence played a part in this ordeal and the member started an inquiry and was documenting the negligence. The Rye Police Department response was to order this member to leave the area immediately. This callous and combative response against a member of the Rye PBA who was performing official union duties is standard operating procedure for Connors. Recently, there was some work done on the floor inside Police H.Q. Despite it being determined that the old floor contained asbestos and Connors being notified of this, the old floor containing the asbestos was cut up without the proper safety precautions. A large amount of asbestos dust was allowed to enter the public lobby and the desk area. It also entered the ventilation system. Our members in the area were exposed to this asbestos. Not only was this dangerous work allowed to take place without any oversight or supervision by Connors and the City of Rye, to this day Connors and OP Shew have done nothing to remediate the asbestos dust from the ventilation system. In general, contractors are given clearance and unsupervised access to areas that are supposed to be secure resulting in member's equipment going missing.

Recently, the traffic safety concerns around the RHS and RMS became a main topic in the community following a tragic accident. For several years prior to this tragedy, the Rye PBA reported several RHS and RMS traffic safety concerns, as well as presenting some possible solutions to these concerns, to Connors. Connors ignored all of our suggestions to correct these potentially dangerous conditions. In addition, a past Rye PBA Vice President who was also a past Rye Police Traffic Sergeant, respectfully reported his findings and some productive solutions to remedy the traffic safety concerns to Connors. Connors took the Sergeant's suggestions as an insult and publicly belittled and chastised this Sergeant who at the time had served admirably and honorably for more than twenty years. A year later, when the Rye School Board wanted the traffic safety issue addressed, Connors submitted the same outlined suggestions as detailed by the Sergeant. The Rye City Council then had the audacity to call Connors an "innovator".

The members of the Rye Police Association want to take pride and follow our Commissioner. Our membership can be very forgiving if we think that the appointed Police Commissioner is honest with the membership, respects them, will stand up for them, will now and then say "job well done" and is concerned about their safety and well being. Unfortunately, this is not in Commissioner Connors' makeup so the end result was the membership of the association having a unanimous, unwavering and determined Vote of "No Confidence" in Connors. OP Shew's actions and inactions in our dealings with the City of Rye including blatantly, intentionally and improperly not responding to our Grievances, failing to meet with us since his arrival here five years ago, questions about his residency, his competence and his commitment to Rye were the driving forces behind our members resounding unanimous Vote of No Confidence in Shew.

We would like to assure the citizens of Rye that even though we are dealing with very difficult times within our department and with City Manager Shew, we will continue to maintain the same great dependable service that we have provided for all of these years.

In closing, we ask that the Rye City Council assist us and rectify this situation.

Respectfully,

The members of the Rye Police Association