

Dominic Rizzi – 2017 Annual Review

1. **Quality – Improvement Needed:** During the review period there was a noticeable decline in the quality of Chief Rizzi’s performance. When asked specific questions about cases or police practices, his most frequent answer was: “I don’t know, I will need to check with my Captains”, or, “My Lieutenants do that work, I’ll have to ask them.” As the Chief of Police, he should have much more solid information on current issues. It was surprising and disappointing that he didn’t better prepare for regular one-on-one briefings with the City Manager and anticipate questions that he would likely be asked. Specific improvement needed: Become well versed in current issues and cases, don’t rely on Command staff to provide all the answers. Prepare for and anticipate questions from the City Manager for one-on-one briefing.
2. **Productivity/Independence/Reliability – Improvement Needed:** Consistent with other sections of this performance review, given his frequent applications for other positions and frequent absences, Chief Rizzi’s productivity level has declined. Also, as pointed out above, Chief Rizzi has had significant trouble acting independently as a leader of the department. He relies heavily on his command staff for answers to routine questions and he appears disengaged from the day to day operation of the department. As a result, his reliability is in decline as well. Specific improvement needed: Again, Chief Rizzi needs to be current with major cases of the moment, he needs to rely less on Command staff. He should be able to anticipate questions he would get from Council, the community and the City Manager and be able to respond to this questions without compromising ongoing investigations.
3. **Job Knowledge – Meets Expectations:** As a seasoned police professional who has come up through the ranks, Chief Rizzi does demonstrate an appropriate level of job knowledge at the macro level. However, he is out of touch with the day-to-day operations of the department and this is a failure that should and could be corrected with appropriate effort. In addition, when asked specific questions about ongoing cases, Chief frequently says “In Chicago we did it this way...I don’t know the specific law in Washington.” Specific improvement needed: Don’t consistently refer to the way things were done in Illinois; after over 5 years on the job in Washington, the Chief should be more knowledgeable of Washington law.
4. **Interpersonal Relationships – Externally: Meets Expectations; Internally: Improvement Needed.**
Chief Rizzi has done a good job in developing personal and professional relationships with community groups outside YPD. This outreach effort is important to the way the department is perceived in the community. The City of Yakima has not experienced significant community protests of police behavior and even when there are difficult situations, such as an officer involved shooting, we do not see the kind of unrest that many cities have experienced. This is due, at least in part, to the outreach efforts Chief Rizzi has taken. He is to be commended for this effort. Internally, however, it is clear that he has lost touch with, and the respect of line officers. He has not communicated his vision for the on-the ground operation of the department. In addition, late in the review period, a complaint of racial and gender based discrimination was made against the

Chief. In a personal interview with the complainant, I heard that the Chief was often “belittling”, “dismissive” and untimely and incomplete in responding to memos with requests and recommendations for improving functions. After the interview, I also reviewed a great deal of documentation the complainant provided, and after conferring with HR, I determined that the complaint was serious enough to merit and outside investigation. I then removed the individual from the direct supervision of the Chief and provided him the appropriate counsel regarding communication and retaliation. Specific improvement needed: Engage with line officers through meaningful dialog at musters and in-service training days; devote time during in-service days to the overall direction of the department; share your vision for how the department will be successful, despite challenges of budget and staffing levels. Demonstrate a fairness, professionalism and respect in all communication with department staff, commissioned and non-commissioned.

5. Attendance – Improvement Needed: Chief Rizzi’s frequent absences while he has pursued employment with other agencies has created a gap in leadership and communication with line officers. Because of his frequent absences, confidence in his leadership of the department had been significantly, negatively impacted. Specific improvement needed: Chief should model appropriate attendance by keeping regular Monday – Friday, 8:00 to 5:00 hours and be available as needed in emergency situations.
6. Initiative/Creativity – Improvement Needed: Given the number of homicides the City experienced in 2016 and 2017, I was surprised that I had to request a regular update on the status of homicide cases. I requested that YPD prepare a monthly update on these cases and that Chief Rizzi be prepared to review the update so that I could be well informed when I was asked questions in the community or by Council members. On a number of occasions, I had to remind Chief Rizzi that the monthly update was overdue and rarely was he able to speak to any details provided in the spreadsheet. Specific improvement needed: Be pro-active and anticipate the questions that are likely to be asked in public settings, in meeting with Council and the City Manager.
7. Adherence to policy – Improvement Needed. Specifically, during the review period, there were at least two major policy issues where Chief Rizzi took incorrect or inappropriate actions. I refer to the attached July 11, 2017 memo regarding Civil Service Police Testing and the attached October 30, 2017 memo regarding the appropriate coding of FMLA. In both cases, Chief Rizzi’s approach was incorrect and the memos outline changes he was required to make. Regarding the July 11 memo, I had a counselling session with Chief Rizzi that same day and he stated that while he disagreed with the interpretations that Legal, HR and the City Manager all agreed on, he indicated he would honor the determination. He stated to me: “Although I disagree, you have made your decision.” Regrettably, he failed to honor that commitment and he sought out the Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Training Commission and, giving her partial information on the matter, asked her to provide an opinion supporting his perspective. Several days later I was in a meeting where this individual was giving a presentation and afterword, she approached me and shared with me Chief Rizzi’s request. She indicated to me that she disagreed with his perspective and, as a 30 year veteran of the King County Sheriff’s

office, found his attempt both inappropriate and insubordinate. In a follow up conversation with Chief Rizzi, he did acknowledge that he had made the contact and apologized, stating “I didn’t mean to undermine you.” Specific improvement needed: Develop a much better relationship with HR and use the knowledge available to help understand policy issues to avoid unintended consequences of hasty decisions.

8. Lead – Needs Improvement: As noted above, Chief Rizzi has done good work and displayed leadership capacity in developing external relationships in the community. That is a critical component of a Police Chief’s duties. However, in individual conversations with Captains Seely and Jones, and Captain Schneider before he retired, I frequently heard comments such as:

“The Chief is not engaged, he is checked out.”

“He doesn’t care.”

“The Chief is never here.”

“We have no idea what his vision is for the Department.”

“He has no idea what’s going on.”

“He is not being honest with us – if he is going to keep applying for other jobs, just be honest about it. He has no credibility”

“He has lost the respect of the troops.”

These are extremely concerning statements from the Command staff and despite frequent coaching and counselling sessions I had with the Chief during the review period, no real change has been made in his approach. He failed to expand his focus to include internal operational issues in an effort to regain credibility. Instead, he continued to highlight external relationships and outreach. Clearly, the community outreach is critical, but the failure to recognize the internal turmoil is a major shortcoming.

In addition, as noted above, on several occasions Chief Rizzi demonstrated a lack of knowledge of City policy and an unwillingness to accept guidance from Legal, HR and the City Manager. Specific improvement needed: Chief Rizzi must be present, he must demonstrate that he has a plan for the department, he must seek out and listen to the issues raised by line officers. In addition, Chief Rizzi must realize that YPD is a department of the City, not an independent agency. Chief Rizzi must demonstrate that he understands why YPD must follow the same rules and policies as other departments.

Overall – Chief Rizzi has made it clear that he does not wish to continue working for the City of Yakima. His frequent applications for other positions, some after he has publically stated that he would not be applying for any other jobs, have created a very negative and detrimental atmosphere in YPD. Nor does he appreciate the responsibility he has to demonstrate a fidelity to City policy and practice. A vast majority of his focus appears to be on the community outreach/public relations aspect of the work, not the inner-workings of the department. This is likely part of his effort to burnish his reputation as he seeks other employment opportunities. In order to be successful as the Yakima Chief of Police, Chief Rizzi must improve his efforts at communicating with line staff, he must demonstrate that he is interested in their issues and aware

of their concerns. He must improve his knowledge of and adherence to City policy and recognize – and act – like a member of the City team, not the head of an independent agency. Chief Rizzi must engage and demonstrate deeper knowledge of ongoing police activities and not rely on his Captains and Lieutenants to carry his water.

Chief Rizzi is intelligent and seasoned as a police officer. I believe the changes required to improve his performance are reasonable, realistic and achievable. If Chief Rizzi does wish to continue with YPD, he must meet these challenges.