

Wilson police chief suspended in special meeting

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By Andrew Freeman



WILSON, Okla. (KXII) -- The Wilson police chief was been suspended without pay for a month at a special meeting Monday, after he dismissed a traffic ticket for the former sheriff of Love County, Joe Russell.

The special meeting began with several members speaking in support of Wilson police chief Felix Hernandez.

"Do not disparage a good man," One of the citizens remarked. "Return him to his fully, publicly-elected duties."

Immediately after, everyone was dismissed as the council went into executive session. Several police officers and the police chief himself were called in to be questioned.

Two hours later, the council handed down their judgement, a 30-day suspension without pay, but vacation time could be used.

The special session follows an announcement made last week that Felix was being put on leave after he dismissed a traffic ticket for former Love County Sheriff Joe Russell, who didn't change lanes for an emergency vehicle.

Chief Hernandez said Russell claimed it wasn't safe to do so.

Russell left office last year under a cloud of controversy, accused of allowing his son to sell drugs out of the home where they both lived, among other allegations. But the Wilson city council wasn't focused on Russell's past. Instead, they claimed Chief Hernandez overstepped his bounds.

The council says only a judge, the mayor with approval from the council, or the issuing officer can dismiss a ticket.

The mayor and Hernandez left without issuing a comment.