

WEST METRO

# Former Hennepin County Sheriff David Hutchinson reinstated as Metro Transit police sergeant with a pay bump

Hutchinson, who was on medical leave as sheriff since May, has been back on the Met Council payroll since Jan. 2

By Rochelle Olson (<https://www.startribune.com/rochelle-olson/6370582/>) Star Tribune |

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Former Hennepin County Sheriff David Hutchinson, who went on paid medical leave from his elected position last May and was censured by the county for creating a hostile work environment, has been reinstated as a sergeant in the Metro Transit Police Department.

According to the Metropolitan Council, Hutchinson was reinstated Jan. 2 as a sergeant at \$55.09 per hour, or \$114,587 annually. When he left Metro Transit as a sergeant in December 2018, shortly after his surprise election as county sheriff, he was paid \$44.26 an hour, or \$92,060 a year.

Metro Transit spokeswoman Terri Dresen declined to discuss Hutchinson's job status, duties or assignment, but in response to the Star Tribune's data practices request, he is listed as an "active" employee.

Dresen added that since Hutchinson's "reinstatement, a formal complaint has been filed. The Met Council takes this complaint very seriously and has begun a full investigation into the allegations." She did not elaborate on the nature of the complaint.

Hutchinson didn't respond to multiple requests for comment Tuesday.

Hutchinson voluntarily left Metro Transit after he defeated incumbent Sheriff Rich Stanek four years ago. Hutchinson did not seek re-election. On Jan. 2, newly elected Hennepin County Sheriff Dawanna Witt was sworn in and Hutchinson went back to Metro Transit.

Under state law, elected officials can be reinstated to the public job they held before taking elective office — something Stanek himself did at the Minneapolis Police Department after serving in state government for years. Dresen said the Met Council was required by law to rehire Hutchinson.

Kathryn Olson, head of data practices for the council, said Hutchinson's higher salary is a result of union wage increases for the job. She said state law requires that he be returned at the salary he would have received if he had not taken leave for elective office.

But Hutchinson did not leave the Hennepin County sheriff's department on good terms. He had not worked since May when he abruptly went on paid medical leave from his \$186,000-a-year job for undisclosed conditions.



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Former Hennepin County Sheriff Dave Hutchinson.

His leave came shortly after the county launched a probe by an outside investigator into claims by county command staff that Hutchinson had created a hostile work environment.

Even though he wasn't on the job for the past eight months, his final year in office was tumultuous. Last month, Hutchinson was censured (<https://www.startribune.com/hennepin-county-board-approves-censure-of-sheriff-david-hutchinson/600236184/>) by the Hennepin County Board after the county's outside investigator detailed the difficult, threatening work environment that Hutchinson created among his command staff.

Last fall, Hutchinson also agreed to a one-month suspension (<https://www.startribune.com/after-dwi-crash-hennepin-county-sheriff-hutchinsons-peace-officer-license-suspended-for-a-month/600212910/>) of his peace officers' license because of a December 2021 drunken-driving crash in which Hutchinson totaled his county-owned Ford Explorer after driving 125 mph on his way home to Bloomington from a conference in Alexandria.

At the scene of the crash on Interstate 94, Hutchinson initially told state troopers he wasn't the driver. He later pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor drunken-driving charge. He told the Star Tribune last month that he has been sober for a year. He also agreed to reimburse the county \$48,000 for the Explorer.

In the months after the crash, command staff members expressed concern for Hutchinson's health to county administrators, saying he was angry, paranoid and rarely showed up in the office, according to the outside investigator's report.

That investigator interviewed 10 senior staff members and provided a 10-page report (<https://www.startribune.com/hennepin-county-releases-report-critical-of-sheriff-david-hutchinsons-behavior/600236493/>) that became public after the County Board voted to censure Hutchinson.

The report documented dozens of incidents where the former sheriff used racist, misogynistic and homophobic language. In the summary, the investigator wrote that Hutchinson's "behavior resulted in a hostile work environment in which members of the command staff were fearful of the sheriff" and concerned about his "mental state and stability."

The report said Hutchinson and his attorney declined to participate in the investigation. In a statement to the Star Tribune last month, Hutchinson denied the allegations and said he was targeted because he's gay.

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