

'I just want him to stop': Year-long investigation lingers against Edmond deputy police chief

 nondoc.com/2023/02/01/edmond-deputy-police-chief-tim-dorsey-under-year-long-investigation

By Joe Tomlinson

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The Edmond Public Safety Center is located at 24 E. First St. (Michael Duncan)

For more than 12 months, a 33-year veteran of the Edmond Police Department who serves as a deputy chief of police has been under investigation for allegations a fellow officer made regarding racism, sexism and workplace bullying.

Deputy Chief Tim Dorsey, who joined the department in 1989, was accused of making disparaging statements about female and Black EPD employees and community members in a January 2022 evaluation email sent by Maj. C.J. Wise, whom Dorsey supervised at the time.

Printed copies of emails between Dorsey and the officer were mailed to NonDoc anonymously in 2022. Edmond officials told NonDoc for months that the investigation would conclude before the end of the year, but that was not the case.

Wise, who confirmed the authenticity of his email evaluation, spent 25 years with EPD before departing last week and beginning his new job Tuesday as police chief in Salina, Kansas. On Monday, Wise briefly discussed the matter with NonDoc, emphasizing his excitement to serve the citizens of Salina but saying that Edmond's handling of his complaint motivated him to seek a change.

"More than anything, it was the city not doing anything about it," Wise said. "I think the length of time shows that they are trying to sweep it under the rug and make it less emotional for people where, over time, they're not as worked up about it. I've worked on homicide investigations that we wrap up within a month, so this thing (is) taking over a year?"

On Jan. 9, Dorsey said the ongoing investigation and the department's policies prevented him from speaking about the allegations against him. But on Tuesday, after learning this article would be published, Dorsey's attorney provided a statement that questioned Wise's motives and alleged separate "complaints pending" against Wise.

"Maj. Wise himself had three complaints pending against him at the time of his departure, including a claim for untruthfulness and another claim for hostile work environment," said Jason Ryan, an attorney with the Ryan Whaley law firm. "We believe that the claims against Chief Dorsey were made out of retaliation for action taken by Chief Dorsey against Maj. Wise. Dorsey requested an investigation of Maj. Wise's complaint immediately upon receiving the same, and we trust the process and believe that the results of the investigation will be favorable for Chief Dorsey."

In response, Wise said he had "never been notified of any of these." He said that, in September, there was discussion about how he had handled a potential citizen complaint.

Wise said he spoke with the City of Edmond's human resources director about Dorsey's alleged misconduct prior to sending his email evaluation. Asked by city officials what he wanted to do about the matter, Wise said he ultimately decided to file a formal complaint in January 2022.



Edmond Police Department Deputy Chief of Police Tim Dorsey began his service with the EPD in 1989. (Provided)

The City of Edmond denied a records request seeking digital copies of correspondence between Dorsey and Wise. But in an October meeting with NonDoc, neither Edmond City Attorney Stephen Murdock nor Edmond Police Department public information officer Emily Ward denied that the correspondence was authentic. After leaving EPD, Wise also confirmed the authenticity of the emails.

Murdock said the City of Edmond hired Phillips Murrah attorney Candace Lisle on Jan. 19, 2022, to conduct an investigation into Wise's allegations regarding Dorsey. Murdock said Lisle is charging the city \$295 per hour for the matter, but he said the City of Edmond has no formal contract with her or the law firm for this investigation or in general.

"It is anticipated that the investigation will be completed very soon," Murdock said Nov. 2.

Weeks later, he said the investigation would be completed by the start of 2023. In early January, he again said the investigation was ongoing. Informed that this story would be publishing today, Murdock sent a statement at 10 p.m. Tuesday declaring that Lisle had concluded her inquiry.

"The investigation has been completed and the city is determining what actions should be taken in response to the findings," Murdock said. "The City of Edmond including the Edmond Police Department takes all complaints received seriously and is committed to fully and completely investigating all complaints so that all parties are treated fairly. The public can take confidence that the necessary steps will be taken in response to the findings."

Lisle did not respond to multiple voicemail messages before the publication of this article. Murdock said Wise's report is the only formal complaint EPD has received regarding Dorsey's conduct.

Murdock said the completed investigation will be reviewed by Edmond Police Chief J.D. Younger and Edmond City Manager Scot Rigby to determine any final action affecting Dorsey's employment.

Asked about the matter in late 2022, members of the Edmond City Council said they were unaware of the allegations against Dorsey. Mayor Darrell Davis said he was aware of an ongoing investigation into an EPD officer, but he said he did not know which officer it involved.

Neither Dorsey nor Wise was placed on leave throughout the investigation, but Dorsey did not supervise Wise for the remainder of his time with the department, Murdock said.

Chris Cook, president of the Edmond Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 136, declined to comment on the situation. Cook said Dorsey is not a member of the FOP but that Wise was.

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'Ignoring problems always makes them bigger'

In a Dec. 30, 2021, email provided to NonDoc, Dorsey asks Wise and Maj. Tim Barnthouse for "input" related to end-of-year evaluations.

Wise replied to Dorsey's email on Jan. 7, 2022, detailing several alleged instances of racism, sexism and bullying by Dorsey in the workplace, dating from April 2018 to April 2021. Twelve days later, the city hired Phillips Murrah to conduct the investigation, according to Murdock.

Wise's response email to Dorsey begins by crediting EPD officers and front-line supervisors for their work. Wise states that he does not try to "mold supervisors in my image" and that he gives them true "decision-making authority."

Wise then states that, during his time working with the patrol division, he has told supervisors to "address issues and not ignore them," and he specifically references another officer who has "a reputation for using force whenever possible."

"This has empowered supervisors to address issues with this officer and it shows other officers that we are not ignoring problems that are seen by them also. I believe in addressing issues to correct them rather than trying to sweep them under the rug," Wise wrote. "Ignoring problems always makes them bigger and causes more problems when they are finally addressed by someone."

Wise then notes his own accomplishments throughout 2021, discussing his participation in youth outreach programs — specifically the 2021 Edmond Community Fair — and his assistance in hiring a "mental health worker who co-responds on mental health calls from North Care."

'I have, in turn, protected you from yourself.'

In his email, Wise then lists several "challenges" with Dorsey's workplace conduct, adding corresponding dates with the majority of the alleged interactions.

The following list represents a sample of the alleged events described by Wise in his email:



Before taking a job in Kansas in January 2023, Maj. C.J. Wise had served with the Edmond Police Department since 1998.
(Facebook)

- **April 6, 2018:** Wise states that Dorsey allegedly had a “problem” with a Black female employee who dyed her hair purple and asked her to change it, stating that the department wants a “more professional appearance.” Wise states, “you never batted an eye at the other officers who have had colored hair.”
- **December 2018:** Wise describes an instance where a female officer was selected as a SWAT member. Wise states that Dorsey has “regularly” asked “how she is doing and if she is able to pass the physical fitness requirements.” Wise alleges that Dorsey has never asked about a male officer, before noting that this officer is “able to do more pull ups than most males.”
- **August 2019:** Wise claims Dorsey told him that he does not like the way one Black supervisor “sounds” on the radio. Wise states that he told Dorsey the officer “talked the same way since he was hired here 20 years ago.” Wise claims Dorsey replied, “Well this is one of those things I know about and should do something.”
- **March 11, 2020:** During a city staff meeting, a speaker presented information about the diversity, equity and inclusion committee. When discussing what makes her “unique,” she “got emotional,” Wise states. Wise alleges that Dorsey laughed about the speaker’s presentation to Wise, before saying he was glad Wise served on the committee. Dorsey then asked what Wise identifies as. A citizen of the Caddo Nation, Wise said, “Native American,” to which Dorsey allegedly replied, “I just see you as white.”
- **Sept. 30, 2020:** Wise alleges that Dorsey came to him and said, “The chief and I want to speak with Black kids and thought we could have our [student resource officers] go talk to the coaches of the sports teams at the high school to see if we can talk to their teams, because that’s where we figured the majority of them probably would be gathered.” Wise says he did not want to pass this “directive” to the SROs and that this would have caused [Dorsey] and the department a lot of trouble.”
- **Nov. 30, 2020:** Dorsey spoke to Wise about an instance where another officer arrested a Black male. Wise alleges that Dorsey said the officer should have patted the man down prior to letting the man walk to the police car. Wise alleges Dorsey said, “I am not being racist, but it seems Black males are carrying guns.”
- **Dec. 7, 2020:** Wise claims Dorsey said in a meeting, “Our patrol guys, not to say anything, need to be aware that young Black men carry guns.”
- **March 2021:** Wise says Dorsey and other EPD officers were discussing who to hire. Wise claims another officer made a comment that he would prefer to “not hire any females,” to which Wise says Dorsey laughed.
- **April 19, 2021:** During a meeting, Wise claims Dorsey said the department needed a “female towel girl” to “hand out towels and give massages.” Dorsey then allegedly told Wise, “Ask her to be the towel girl,” referencing an employee in the department.

- **April 19, 2021:** During a different meeting on the same day, Wise states there was discussing about an incident where an EPD officer pulled over a Black male for minor traffic violations. Wise says the man “refused to get out of the car and claimed we were going to kill him.” As the violations were minor, the supervisor chose to allow the subject to leave, according to Wise, who then alleges that Dorsey wanted to send “plainclothes officers to go after” the man. “We are always talking to our officers about not escalating situations and you have seemed to be a proponent of this until this incident involving a Black male,” Wise states in the email.
- **April 22, 2021:** After Wise and another officer made school resource officer selections, Dorsey questioned two of the selections, Wise states. Wise alleges that Dorsey said he worried about one of the selections because of the way the female officer looked, claiming that he thinks “students will tease her and think she is a guy.”

In his emailed evaluation, Wise noted a few alleged instances where he felt Dorsey bullied or intimidated other officers, but he did not include corresponding dates with the incidents:

- Wise claims that one officer’s K-9 had “teeth issues” from a corrective surgery. The officer told Wise that Dorsey had allegedly chosen “the low-price fix,” which caused the issue. The officer spoke out to Dorsey about the issue via email, according to Wise, who alleges that the officer’s supervisors gave the officer a training score of seven on his evaluation in retaliation for speaking out.
- Wise says that in 2020 an officer told him of plans to retire because of Dorsey’s conduct. “I told him not to give you (Dorsey) the satisfaction and that his career will outlast yours. That officer is still working here,” Wise states in the email.

Wise then stated that he believes Dorsey has “tried to use [Wise’s] position to pick on or bully others,” and that Wise’s refusal to carry out directives has “placed [Wise] on Dorsey’s radar.”

“You don’t realize that I am not only protecting the officers from you but if I carried out your wishes that you could be in serious violation of several laws. So I have, in turn, protected you from yourself,” Wise wrote. “It appears from the conversation the chief, you and I had that you are planting seeds in the chief’s mind that I need to be moved to a different division where I would not be working under you. So, my ability to protect our officers from your behavior is in jeopardy.”

Wise then stated that he wants Dorsey to treat all employees “fair and equitable.”

“I want you to stop bullying officers or picking on them for any reason, but especially for racist and sexist reasons,” Wise wrote. “It is 2022 and this way of thinking and acting has no place in a professional agency like the Edmond Police Department or really anywhere.”

Wise then concluded his email by stating he wants to build new relationships in the community and maintain the ones he has already built.

“If allowed, I plan to assist you in treating all our officers fair and equitable,” Wise said.

Wise: ‘I feel like I’ve done the right thing.’



An Edmond police cruiser sits outside EPD headquarters Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2023. (Michael McNutt)

In his brief interview Monday, Wise said he was not the person who mailed his evaluation email to NonDoc, and he said he does not know who sent it. He said several officers and Edmond FOP leaders are aware of the investigation and his evaluation email to Dorsey.

Wise said he sat down with Lisle for an interview in late January 2022 that lasted about seven hours at the city’s administrative services building. As word spread about his allegations against Dorsey, Wise said he saw a mixed reaction from other officers in the department.

“There were a lot of people that it affected. They came and they thanked me for standing up for them,” Wise said.

However, he said some in leadership positions seemed to repudiate him.

“It seemed like people with higher ranks in the department, they definitely sided with the city and Chief Dorsey,” Wise said.

Dorsey served as Wise’s direct supervisor after Wise was promoted to major in August 2016. Wise served as the commander of EPD’s patrol division at that time, where he supervised about 90 patrol officers.

“In all honesty, I used to look up to the guy when I first started,” Wise said of Dorsey.

A Caddo Nation citizen, Wise said he felt an obligation to speak up about his concerns for the sake of Edmond residents, his colleagues and his profession.

“Some of the stuff was said in the presence of other people, and I was kind of blown away that nobody else had an issue with it, you know? And I think it was because they are not minority,” Wise said. “I think when you’ve been a minority, it makes you more sympathetic and empathetic to that kind of stuff when you hear it and see it.”

Wise said EPD officers may feel pressure to avoid reporting their peers for discriminatory behavior.

“I think, too, there’s that culture (where) some people don’t see a problem with any of that, so how dare I put a light on that? And then there’s also people that think, ‘Well, that may not be the best thing, but we’re cops, and cops don’t tell on cops,’” Wise said. “I saw some people, just the way they treated me, it turned some people against me for sure.”

Wise said he stands by everything in his evaluation email to Dorsey. He said he does not regret speaking out, as there are “a lot of good people” within EPD whom he hopes to help.

“I just want him to stop. He needs to be aware,” Wise said. “I feel like I’ve done the right thing and I would do it again.”