

Ringgold police chief accused of covering up officer's relationship with teenager

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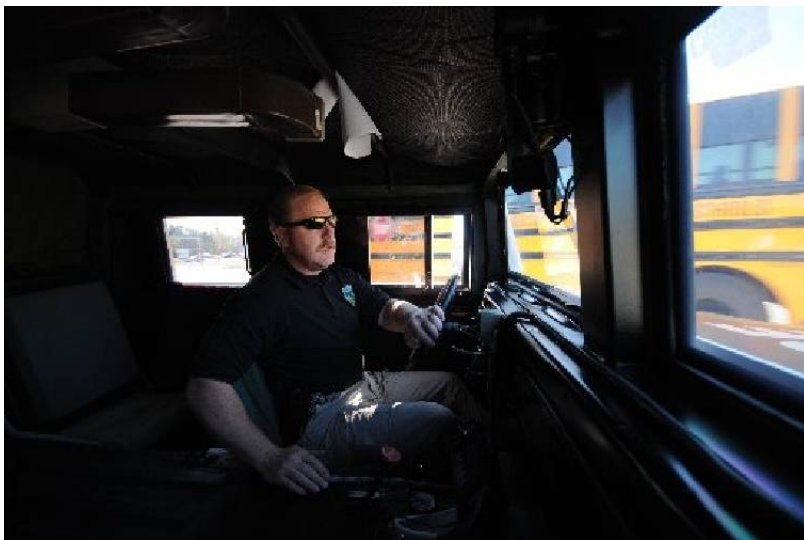
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Ringgold Police Chief Dan Bilbrey let Officer Kevin...

Photo by Contributed Photo /Times Free Press.

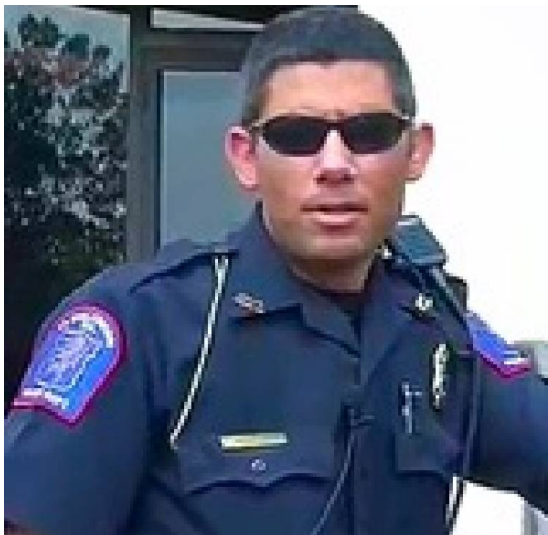
RINGGOLD — Before the city of Fort Oglethorpe fired him for an inappropriate relationship with a teenager, Officer Kevin Shadwick had sex with that same girl while he was working for the city of Ringgold.

Shadwick resigned from the Ringgold Police Department in July 2013. Fort

Oglethorpe Chief David Eubanks said Wednesday that Shadwick resigned after somebody complained to Ringgold Chief Dan Bilbrey about Shadwick's sexual relationship with a teenager.

Eubanks said he did not know about Shadwick's behavior when he hired the officer seven months later. He said he only found out when the girl's parents filed a complaint with Fort Oglethorpe in July.

Bilbrey didn't log the initial complaint into Shadwick's personnel file, Eubanks said. Instead, Bilbrey gave the officer a choice: resign or face an investigation. Shadwick resigned.



Ringgold Police Chief Dan Bilbrey let Officer Kevin...

Photo by Contributed Photo /Times Free Press.

Eubanks said Bilbrey should have alerted him in January 2014 when Fort Oglethorpe hired Shadwick.

"I got nothing," Eubanks said. "How hard is it to pick up the phone?"

Shadwick's personnel file from Ringgold makes no mention of a sexual relationship with a teenager. Bilbrey wrote in the resignation paperwork that he would not recommend Shadwick for another job, but he did not explain why.

In his resignation letter, Shadwick wrote that he planned to apply for a job with the Georgia State Patrol but wanted some time off first.

"I want to spend some holidays and quality time with my family," Shadwick wrote.

Bilbrey did not return multiple calls seeking comment Wednesday. Shadwick could not be reached for comment.

Shadwick, 44, worked for Fort Oglethorpe from November 2006 through March 2013, when the city manager fired Eubanks. Shadwick worked for Ringgold for about four months and rejoined the Fort Oglethorpe department in January 2014, when a new city manager hired Eubanks back.

Because Shadwick had worked for him before, Eubanks did not try to interview the officer's former bosses. In 2009 and 2014, Shadwick won the department's "Top Gun" award, meaning he was the city's most accurate shooter at the firing range.

"I saw no reason not to hire him," Eubanks said. "We needed his help and appreciated his loyalty."

Eubanks said Wednesday he did not know Shadwick worked for Ringgold until the GBI began investigating the officer. He said his information about Bilbrey failing to report Shadwick's sexual relationship with a teenager came from conversations with the GBI.

When asked what Bilbrey knew about Shadwick, GBI Special Agent in Charge Greg Ramey declined to comment. He said investigators had not found a criminal charge against Shadwick, though the inquiry is still active.

Shadwick told his bosses he did not have sex with the girl before she turned 16, the legal age of consent in Georgia. He also said he did not receive naked pictures from her until she was 18, also the legal limit in the state.

Nevertheless, Fort Oglethorpe officials fired Shadwick on Sept. 8 for violating department policies.

If he had known about Shadwick's sexual relationship, Eubanks said, he would not have hired the officer. He wishes Bilbrey had publicized the issue.

"By (keeping the issue quiet), they don't alert anyone to the fact that there might be a problem," Eubanks said. "I terminated him. That's going to (the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council). That's going to be on his record. They will do an investigation. They will decide what to do with his certification.

"But at least another agency 100 miles from here can't say, 'Well, hell, I wish Fort Oglethorpe had done something.'"

Sex on duty

In a recorded interview with Eubanks on Sept. 8, Shadwick said he met the girl when he worked as an off-duty security officer at the Carmike Battlefield 10 movie theater in Fort Oglethorpe. He said the girl started talking to him, took his cellphone and texted herself so they would have each other's numbers.

Shadwick told Eubanks he thought the girl was 19. He said he had sex with her twice: Once when he worked for Ringgold and once when he worked for Fort Oglethorpe.

He blamed the girl.

"I let her talk me into having oral sex," he said.

He also told Eubanks he began a relationship with another girl, aged 19. He said this girl texted him partially nude pictures. They almost had sex in her bedroom. But as they were undressing, Shadwick told Eubanks last week, that first girl texted him.

He said he retreated from the second girl's house because he didn't want to hurt the first girl.

"I really do have feelings for the girl," Shadwick said. "She's a sweet, sweet person."

Shadwick, whose wife of more than 20 years filed for divorce in July, said he thought the teenager's parents approved of the relationship. He said the girl told him she kept her mother and stepfather in the loop.

When the girl's mother filed a complaint in July, Shadwick said he visited them.

The girl's mother did not respond to a call from the Times Free Press routed through a family attorney. But Shadwick told Eubanks his conversation with the parents was cordial. Though they were first upset at him, he said, they calmed down when they learned he thought they had always

known what was going on.

"I tried to treat (the girl) well and be nice to her," Shadwick said. "I tried to speak to the parents because I wanted to know (why they filed the complaint) and be straightforward with them. It was my understanding that everything was OK."

"I think," Eubanks said, "it's pretty obvious that something was wrong."

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