



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Warden Hepp Settlement and Conviction Supported by the Sheriff's Office

Yesterday, Former Wisconsin Department of Corrections Warden Randall Hepp was convicted in Dodge County Circuit Court of Violating State/County Institution Laws, which is a Class C Misdemeanor in Wisconsin. He had originally been charged with misconduct in public office, a class I Felony, the lowest level felony in the State of Wisconsin. This reduced sentence was a result of a settlement between the district attorney and the defendant. I, Sheriff Dale Schmidt, after initially ordering the arrest of Randall Hepp, support our Dodge County District Attorney, Andrea Will, in her decision to enter this settlement agreement. I can understand why some may feel additional sanctions are warranted, but our court system must be blind to "feelings" and "agendas" and decisions made solely on the facts of the case.

Investigating and arresting Randall Hepp was one of the most difficult cases I have been part of, leading to some of the most difficult decisions I have had to make during my time as sheriff. Randall Hepp was placed in a very difficult position by Governor Tony Evers and then Corrections Secretary Kevin Carr. Don't get me wrong, he was the warden and was by law administratively responsible for Waupun Correctional Institution, and as a result, two deaths that occurred. While we explored it, no Wisconsin or federal law directly tied back to his bosses, who failed to provide adequate resources or leadership.

Let's not minimize Randall Hepp's consequences. As a result of this incident, he has faced intense public scrutiny, is no longer an employee of the Department of Corrections (DOC) and has now been convicted of a crime and has a criminal record. That is not the same outcome for his former bosses.

Since the news of this conviction came out yesterday, there has now been unfair and unwarranted scrutiny of District Attorney (DA) Andrea Will regarding this case. DA Will has worked side by side with me on this case since long before the charges were brought against Randall Hepp and the other DOC employees arrested. DA Will and her staff sat with me and my detectives through hours of review of evidence, and we all made decisions collaboratively on the arrests and charges that would be made. That collaboration did not end once the arrests were made but has continued through the prosecution of those cases. DA Will's input was invaluable in building the case against those arrested.

Keep in mind that there are many pieces to this puzzle that have not yet made their way through the criminal justice system, as there are still outstanding cases being processed through the courts. There most certainly is accountability taking place and being sought for the two deaths for which the sheriff's office made arrests in collaboration with DA Will. All persons remain innocent until found guilty in court, which again, Randall Hepp has been found guilty.

Unfortunately, media outlets have tried to paint DA Will as a political pawn of Governor Evers. That could not be further from the truth. Simply because she was appointed by Governor Evers does not make her a pawn of the governor, and she certainly is not. Three republican candidates put in for that appointment, and DA Will was chosen based on her qualifications, not her political affiliation. I can say that I could not be happier with DA Will, her qualifications, her criminal justice philosophy, and her willingness to go to bat for justice in our county. I can also assure you that in my time getting to know DA Will, her decisions are never politically motivated or driven by outside influence. They are driven by what is best for the community and victims.

Dodge County residents already know that when someone breaks the law in Dodge County and the sheriff's office investigates, there will be accountability. Contrary to the DOC, we call those placed in the jail, inmates, as that is what they are. Dodge County can also know that when those inmates are brought to DA Will for processing through the courts, she will vigorously and fairly prosecute those inmates, seeking justice for the citizens of Dodge County.

In addition to our sheriff's office command staff, the Dodge County Sheriff's Office Criminal Investigative Division (Detectives) and our patrol deputies have nothing but admiration and respect for the excellent work done by DA Will and her staff.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt

Questions may be directed to Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt

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