



Apopka Professional Firefighters Association
581 N Park Ave #1243
Apopka, FL 32704

March 1st, 2023

To whom it may concern,

The Apopka Professional Firefighters Association is hereby notifying any and all stakeholders in the City of Apopka and Apopka Fire Department that our firefighters have **no confidence** in the continued leadership of Fire Chief Sean Wylam.

The Union Executive Board conducted a polling of our membership in regard to a confidence vote in the leadership of Fire Chief Sean Wylam after the issue was raised officially at a Union meeting on February 7th, 2023. Our Union members make up nearly 90% of the active workforce with greater than 6 months on the job. The results of that polling came back with 85% voting in the affirmative that they have **no confidence** that Fire Chief Sean Wylam has the competence and abilities to lead the Apopka Fire Department forward and provide a safe and proactive environment for continued well managed growth. Let us be clear that we don't feel that Fire Chief Sean Wylam is a bad person or one that acts with malicious intent but it has become clear and apparent that he is, and has been, incapable of competently managing the men and women who have dedicated and given their lives in service of the Apopka Fire Department.

We received votes from all but 4 eligible members. The results are as follows:

(NO) No Confidence: 85% (0.8488)

(YES) Confidence: 15% (0.1511)

Abstained: .05% (0.0465)

The position below is brought to you by your Apopka Professional Firefighters Association Executive Board and the expressed concerns of our membership.

A fire chief is responsible for overseeing and managing their fire department, ensuring that it operates efficiently, effectively, and safely to protect the community from any and all types of emergencies or hazards. When a fire chief ignores, is oblivious to, or knowingly contradicts the interests of their firefighters and citizens, it can cause division and conflict within the organization. For example, when a Chief Wylam publicly refuses funding to improve staffing and

department safety measures and works against the interests of the fire department, promoting unnecessary budget cuts or proposals that place more important items on the back burner, this can create a sense of betrayal and lack of trust among the department's personnel. Firefighters, staff and constituents feel that their chief is not representing their best interests and that their concerns and needs are being overlooked in favor of political or personal considerations. Such acts can create a rift between the fire chief and their department, leading to a breakdown in communication and collaboration. Firefighters and other personnel may feel less motivated and less committed to their work, which can have a negative impact on the department's ability to carry out its mission. Moreover, this division has led to a loss of respect for the fire chief's authority and decision-making abilities, making it harder for them to lead effectively.

Vote of no confidence.

A vote of no confidence is a formal procedure where a group of people expresses their presence or lack of confidence in an individual's ability to fulfill their duties effectively. In the case of a fire chief, a vote of no confidence may be necessary for several reasons. Firstly, a fire chief is responsible for overseeing the operations of a fire department, ensuring that the department is adequately staffed, effectively trained, and that its equipment and employee's are well-maintained and cared for. If the fire chief is not fulfilling these responsibilities effectively and creates an environment where employees feel undervalued, it can compromise the safety of the public and the firefighters. In such cases, a vote of no confidence can bring attention to the fire chief's shortcomings and force these issues to be addressed.

Secondly, a fire chief manages the fire department's budget. If the fire chief is not addressing the budget effectively, it can lead to financial problems immediately and down the road, which can impact the quality of service the fire department provides. A vote of no confidence can highlight these issues and force the fire chief to be more accountable for the department's finances.

Thirdly, a vote of no confidence can be necessary if the fire chief is not effectively or truthfully communicating with the firefighters, community, or city officials. A lack of honest communication can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts that can impact the effectiveness of the fire department. A vote of no confidence in a fire chief can be necessary if the fire chief is not fulfilling their responsibilities in mismanaging the department's personnel, budget, procedures, training, safety, and/or not communicating effectively. Such a vote can draw attention to the issues and force the fire chief or city officials to take action to address them.

To further characterize our position we will highlight several particularly illustrative examples of past failures as typically past behavior is the best predictor of future performance.

The Apopka Professional Firefighters Association surveyed our membership in December of 2020 and several items were identified where serious improvements were needed. These results were reported to Chief Wylam and fundamentally ignored. The concerns were training, education, officer development, lack of communication, poor equipment and living conditions. Three years later we are struggling over the same issues with no actual active plan in place and no tangible plan or vision for the future.

We have noticed a steady decline in morale and direction for the Apopka Fire Department. Some of the major concerns of the membership are and have been:

- 1) The day of Austin Duran's injury Chief Wylam was present on site but had no presence or direct involvement on scene.
- 2) The day of Austin Duran's injury other fire chiefs, firefighters, and even retired firefighters had an immediate presence at the hospital and Chief Wylam went home. (This is not the first time he chose to not visit injured firefighters in the hospital).
- 3) When Austin Duran was in the hospital fighting for his life Chief Wylam took personal time off and went to a conference down south. He was not present when Austin passed away leaving others to manage that devastation without his leadership or direct involvement once again.
- 4) In the wake of Austin Duran's death Chief Wylam did not spend any time visiting or contacting any stations or firefighters.
- 5) Chief Wylam has failed to recognize the slightest accountability in the wake of our very own LODD and incredulously accepted a flawless annual performance review.
- 6) Chief Wylam participated in the fabrication of a narrative about chairing an ad hoc committee to review Austin Duran's LODD without notifying any referenced agency or body; furthermore, misleading the Apopka Fire Department safety committee.

Budget Proposal Failures 2021

- 7) Refusal to make necessary staffing improvements
- 8) Refusal to take a proactive approach with capital improvements such as ambulances, fire trucks, and stations leaving the department one step away from a loss to services and infrastructure failure.
- 9) Creating a presentation to actively work against these improvements in safety and staffing.

Budget Proposal Failures 2022

- 10) Wylam had to be pleaded with by firefighters, city council members, and bereaved family members to make necessary staffing improvements
- 11) Wylam had to be pleaded with by firefighters, city council members, and bereaved family members to create a Safety Chief position following a LODD
- 12) Wylam had to be pleaded with to create a Training Chief position following a LODD.
- 13) Never taking any ownership of the refusal to fight for or fund these positions yet taking credit as the Union, Duran family, and Council Members made them impossible to refuse.
- 14) Wylam lacks any experience or knowledge in managing, training, or leading a department of this size and structure and has vehemently opposed outside help (RE: Gannon Emergency Solutions report).
- 15) Continued absence of any standardized officer development program
- 16) Chief Wylam put together a proposal for a 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, recruited firefighter input and then failed to follow through with any promotable plan.
- 17) The decision to eliminate the Deputy Chief position and sustain three years with no formal training director.
- 18) Failure to make an effort or substantial presence when his firefighters are ill, injured, or on life support in the hospital.

- 19) Blatant lack of professionalism, honesty, and humility in the face of the Gannon Report findings.
- 20) Demands to strike out any and all comments and or concerns from his own employees in the Gannon report.
- 21) Failure to properly follow City Procedures in investigation and termination processes
- 22) Continued communication failures and breakdown with administrative staff and line staff.
- 23) Lack of transparency to firefighters and council with State Fire Marshal's office dealings
- 24) Lack of transparency to firefighters and council with NIOSH information
- 25) Continuously disingenuous in front of city council
- 26) Inability to admit or recognize many shortcomings and failures.

Thank you for your time,
Executive Board
Apopka Professional Firefighters Association