

Police

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Afterward, the arrested man accused Halupowski of unnecessary roughness.

Halupowski's story sheds light on an important but obscure state advisory committee within the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards & Training, which often is known as DPSST.

Called the Police Policy Committee, it judges whether officers' misconduct is bad enough to merit stripping them of their badges. It is composed almost entirely of law enforcement officers.

Including, for all of seven years, Craig Halupowski.

Now, some lawmakers want to change the makeup of the 15-member Police Policy Committee.

Halupowski, a 30-year veteran officer, resigned his position at Woodburn in 2020 and stipulated to giving up his badge before the Woodburn mall arrest ever reached his now-former colleagues on the state committee. The state never announced his departure from the committee. Nor is it mentioned in the minutes of any of its meetings. His name just disappeared.

Documents released under public records law, however, show the allegations against Halupowski included misuse of confidential law enforcement databases for personal reasons, unprofessional behavior, untruthfulness and having "associated with known criminals."

That "association" was a close one, investigators concluded: Some of the purported criminals were living in Halupowski's house, allegedly using heroin and meth on the premises and selling those drugs from the residence when he was not around.

Halupowski's quiet departure from the Police Policy Committee was brought to light through data analysis and reporting by a new nonprofit journalism venture called The Portland Record. The case is relevant now because of the light it sheds on the agency that regulates officer behavior for the state.

Halupowski, for his part, told the Portland Tribune the allegations leading to him resigning were overblown. The bottom line: His family was in trouble, and his problems stemmed from that.

"I freely admit I screwed up" the former cop said. But, he added: It was worth it to keep his daughter alive.

'Flawed' mindset

State Sen. Lew Frederick, D-Portland, has been a leading figure in efforts to remake police oversight in Salem. He's floating a bill that would add to and diversify the membership of the committee on which Halupowski sat.

Frederick said the story shows that officers sometimes don't get the psychological support they need. Halupowski recently was divorced, self-admittedly burned out on his job and enmeshed in the stress of caring for a daughter struggling with drug addiction.

Because of the psychological demands of the job, the state's police oversight apparatus needs reforms, Frederick said, and the public should have more of a role, rather than the apparatus being dominated by police.

"I wish I could say I'm surprised by this," he said. "We have some folks who are flawed, and yet are in position of power."

Part of the problem, Frederick said, is a police culture that attracts people who look at society in terms of criminal "bad guys" versus other people.

Halupowski's case shows



Phil Hawkins/PMG file

In 2018, Officer Craig Halupowski, right, and Officer Jorge Gaspar place a wreath on the memorial of Capt. Tom Tennant, who died in a Woodburn West Coast Bank bombing. Chief Jim Ferraris looks on.

how for one cop, those lines blurred. Not only did he fail to bust the "bad guys," he was giving them a place to stay.

His daughter, in her early 20s, was addicted to heroin. Halupowski said he let some of her friends stay with him to keep her happy and where he could help her.

Union post sparked prominence

It was Halupowski's activism in the union representing his fellow officers that put him on a statewide stage.

A former military policeman, he was hired by the Woodburn Police Department in 1989. In 2008, the bombing of a bank in Woodburn shook the town and the department of roughly two dozen officers. The explosion killed an Oregon State Police Trooper William Hakim and Woodburn Police Captain Thomas Tennant, who was Halupowski's friend and mentor.

Two years later, the Oregon Council of Police Associations, an officers' union group, nominated Halupowski, who'd become head of the police union in Woodburn, to serve on the Police Policy Committee of DPSST for the first time. He thus became part of the system in which police departments are supposed to report to the state when an officer is fired for misconduct or who resigns while under investigation.

After reviewing each situation, the Police Policy Committee, balanced between representatives of police management and unions — with just one public member — makes recommendations to the full board of DPSST on whether officers' misconduct is serious enough to merit stripping them of their police certification.

While members of the full DPSST board are appointed after undergoing an Oregon State Police background check, members of the Police Policy Committee undergo no such check.

Halupowski was reappointed in 2012, then in 2014 was appointed by then-Gov. John Kitzhaber to serve on the Governor's Commission on the Law Enforcement Medal of Honor.

He stepped down from the police committee in 2016, but was reappointed in 2018. Minutes of the committee show that he was frequently on the side of votes arguing that officers should not be decertified — and often in the minority.

Halupowski's former chief, Jim Ferraris, told the Portland Tribune he never received a call when Halupowski was se-

lected to rejoin the Police Policy Committee in 2018.

Ferraris said he thinks DPSST should do full background checks before people are appointed to the influential committee. If he had received such a call, Ferraris said, he'd likely have recommended someone else from his force due to some "challenges and issues" Halupowski had faced as a cop. Given the importance of the committee, the chief called DPSST to ask why he hadn't been consulted.

"The response was, 'Well, that's not the protocol,'" Ferraris said.

Bombing shook town

Halupowski traces his troubles to the 2008 Woodburn bombing that took the life of his good friend and blew off the leg of his then-chief, Scott Russell.

He said three doctors supported his claim for worker's comp benefits to get treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, but the department's doctor said his symptoms dated to childhood and were not work-related.

Halupowski said he stopped being there for his wife and two kids.

"In layman's terms, it totally f--- me up: I lost friends, it cost me my marriage. And it probably had a healthy dose of why my kids ended up going into drugs," he said, adding that basically, he "just quit" tending to his family life. "As soon as I got home, I shut down."

The bombing, he added, "was the worst thing in a long line of other stuff. I've been on, you know, fatal crashes, child deaths, all that stuff. And over time it just starts wearing on you."

Halupowski later told investigators his daughter became addicted to drugs in roughly 2015.

He and his wife filed for divorce in 2017, and the three-year process was contentious. He told his co-workers he was angry at his ex and her new boyfriend, and was bitter that he was losing half of his retirement benefits. He wanted to retire, he told a clerk in the department, but needed to keep his medical benefits, records show.

Arresting daughter's friend led to downfall

The beginning of the end for Halupowski came after his statement — "If he resists, we beat the s--- out of him" — in front of the Woodburn mall that day in 2019.

His fellow officer called him out on the statement, and Ha-

lupowski later said he'd been joking. Investigators concluded the allegation of unnecessary roughness was unfounded.

More problematic? The man he arrested turned out to be a friend of his daughter's who'd had numerous charges in the past for meth, heroin and theft. It turned out the man had been hanging out at Halupowski's house.

Just two days before the man's arrest in Woodburn, he was arrested by a Salem officer. A search produced Halupowski's personal checks. The Salem Police Department immediately notified the Woodburn cop of the arrest.

Salem police also found a text message from Halupowski's daughter in the man's phone. She accused him of stealing one of her father's handguns.

After arresting his daughter's associate in Woodburn, Halupowski sent a memo to his supervisors recusing himself from the case, saying he didn't recognize the man's name until afterward.

The stolen gun was a World War-II era Luger 9mm, bearing a Nazi Eagle and swastika. Halupowski told Keizer police it was worth about \$1,500, and his daughter had between 15 to 20 friends over to his house the week it was stolen.

Things got worse from there

On June 2, 2019, neighbors of Halupowski's home in

Keizer called in a noise complaint about a car parked in his driveway, windows open, music blaring. The police who responded discovered a young woman unconscious in the front seat, syringes sticking out of what appeared to be a heroin kit next to her. Medics resuscitated her and police cited her for possession of heroin and meth.

They knocked on Halupowski's door, but the cop was fast asleep inside the house.

Two days later, the department opened up an investigation of Halupowski's May 19 arrest of his daughter's friend — the man suspected of stealing the cop's checks and Nazi-era Luger.

On June 7, Halupowski reported to Keizer Police another gun stolen from his house, this time a Smith and Wesson. It turned up in August, when Linn County sheriff's deputies arrested two men who were using it for target practice.

By September, the department's internal investigations into Halupowski were going strong, and Chief Jim Ferraris asked Keizer Police Department to launch a criminal investigation as well.

Neighbors went into detail on what they'd first told police in June; they suspected people were dealing drugs from the cop's home.

Citing an injury, Halupowski went on desk duty. And things

kept looking worse.

Case grows stronger

On Sept. 29, 2019, the boyfriend of Halupowski's daughter, an alleged drug dealer, told his probation officer he'd been living at the cop's home.

On Nov. 6, the probation officer visited Halupowski's home and found a needle lying out in plain sight, along with baggies and other drug paraphernalia. Halupowski told the probation officer it had happened before — he'd even found a baggie of what appeared to be heroin and flushed it down the toilet. Investigators later deemed that to be tampering with evidence.

Halupowski told the probation officer that a Nov. 3 police stop of his daughter and her boyfriend — who was on probation and out after curfew — was "chippy," meaning bogus. Investigators later cited this as evidence of questionable judgement.

On Nov. 22, the day after a meeting of the Police Policy Committee, Halupowski was placed on administrative leave, never to return to work. He requested a leave from the Police Policy Committee.

By the time the investigation was done, his colleagues at the Woodburn department found that, for years, Halupowski had been illegally using confidential law enforcement databases. He checked out his soon-to-be-ex-wife, her boyfriend, his daughter and many of her friends. In 2019 he ran his own name three times.

They accused Halupowski of other violations, too. In one instance, a family reported a man of violating a restraining order, and Halupowski declined to arrest him — despite a statute making that arrest mandatory. A business owner complained of embezzlement, and instead of writing up a report and starting an investigation, Halupowski reportedly told him it was a civil matter.

Investigator: He knew what he was doing

The investigator didn't find evidence that Halupowski used excessive force against his daughter's friend who he arrested at the mall, and Halupowski said his remark about beating the man up was joke.

But the investigator concluded that Halupowski had abused his authority to access confidential information despite knowing it was illegal and a violation of policy.

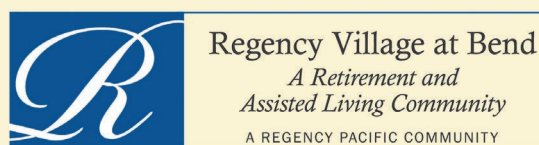
In March 2020, in an interview with investigators, Halupowski admitted that he

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