

**STATEMENT – SHERIFF KURT PICKNELL,
WALWORTH COUNTY SHERIFF’S OFFICE**

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Walworth County Sheriff Kurt Picknell is issuing the following public statement in response to recent quotes from Detective Konopski contained within the Lake Geneva Regional News on October 14, 2022 (and other associated, local media outlets thereafter) regarding the Sheriff’s Office’s background examination of former employee Gerardo Baca:

On October 14, 2022, I became aware Detective Craig Konopski provided a series of statements to at least one local media outlet regarding his involvement in the 2016 hiring background process for Gerardo Baca. In particular, Detective Konopski claimed he “red-flagged” Mr. Baca and recommended to the Sheriff’s Office he not be hired. Detective Konopski also claimed he had a computer file containing negative information on Mr. Baca that has now gone missing.

I am deeply concerned by these allegations. As I have already stated, I was never made aware of the claims Detective Konopski is now making, including at the time of Mr. Baca’s resignation from Walworth County or his arrest by Waukesha County Sheriff’s Office, both of which occurred in early-March 2022. Additionally, the December 13, 2016 background examination report (and the only background report) submitted by Detective Konopski states:

“The applicant [Gerardo Baca] appears to be an excellent employee according to his current and previous employers. The applicant meets the qualifications to become a Deputy Sheriff – Patrolman with the Walworth County Sheriff’s Office.”

Therefore, I have reason to believe the claims may be false. Because the County and the Sheriff’s Office take alleged untruthfulness with a high-degree of seriousness, the Sheriff’s Office—in consultation with the County Administrator, Corporation Counsel, Human Resources Department, and outside legal counsel—has determined it is necessary to hire a third-party, outside investigator to conduct a thorough and independent investigation of Detective Konopski related to the background check he performed and to his reported public comments on the background check.

The County and Sheriff’s Office takes these allegations seriously—if any individual(s) are identified as having engaged in misconduct, they will be held accountable. The Walworth County Sheriff’s Office is a very good agency with great people. As always, we will continue to serve the mission of public safety.