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Wednesday, February 21, 2024

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Cops refuse to recognize chief

LP FOP claims Buell's civilian status runs contrary to city code

BOB KASARDA AND STAN MADDUX
The Times

LAPORTE — Local police officers say they are not recognizing the recent appointment of Richard Buell as their chief, claiming his civilian status runs contrary to city code. The officers, speaking through

the local Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 54, call on Mayor Tom Dermody to correct the perceived wrong and replace Buell with one of the qualified internal candidates who applied for the department's top job.

"In the meantime, we recognize Assistant Chief Matthew Drangmeister as a legitimate officer who has earned his appointment, and we shall operate under his leadership until the time a new Chief is appointed," the FOP wrote in a

letter addressed to "the citizens of LaPorte."

In their letter, the FOP said the mayor is required under local ordinance to name a police chief from within the department who has served five years within the ranks immediately prior to the appointment.

"It is our belief that the intent of the city ordinance was to limit the office of Chief of Police to a certified police officer with the authority to enforce the law and make arrests —

Mr. Buell is neither of these things as a non-sworn, citizen appointee," according to the FOP statement.

The ordinance was also designed as a safeguard against the appearance of nepotism and corruption, the FOP said. The group said Buell's appointment contradicts these two principles, but did not elaborate.

"We ask our community to carefully consider the implications of our city's leadership being able to violate our codes and make changes

to cover up their own wrongdoings," the FOP said.

But Dermody said his appointment of Buell was legal, and he said he expects the city's officers to honor Buell's appointment.

Dermody said the local code cited by the FOP is no longer in effect because a 1996 change in state law gave mayors the authority to hire police chiefs from outside their departments.

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KALE WILK, FILE, THE TIMES

United Steelworkers union members rally for a fair contract outside Gary Works in 2018.

USW appeals to White House

Union is campaigning against Nippon's US Steel acquisition

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The United Steelworkers has taken its campaign against a Nippon acquisition of U.S. Steel to the White House.

The union representing thousands of steelworkers in Northwest Indiana continues to lobby against the \$14.9 billion deal, raising concerns about a foreign steelmaker acquiring one

of America's most iconic companies and the first U.S. business to ever surpass \$1 billion in capitalization. It appealed to the White House, sharing concerns about national security and whether the new owner would enforce its contract since it has so far failed to share financial information.

"Steel is vital to our national security and critical infrastructure, and USW members are proud to manufacture some of the highest quality products in the world," USW International President David McCall said in a statement. "Unfortunately, the proposed sale agreement

between Nippon Steel and U.S. Steel puts our members' and our nation's interests in jeopardy. We received personal assurances that President Joe Biden has our backs. He's always been a friend to the American worker and our union, and we're grateful he's taking an interest in this matter. It's essential that we continue to safeguard our domestic steel-making capacity, and we appreciate the president's ongoing commitment to revitalizing our critical supply chains and rebuilding our nation's economic strength."

Nippon Steel pledged that it will cut no jobs, including of

the 1,000 workers at U.S. Steel's Pittsburgh headquarters. The Tokyo-based steelmaker said it will bring additional resources, capital and technology to U.S. Steel, such as to further its decarbonization and digitalization efforts.

The company said it will make no changes to the current collective bargaining agreement. Nippon Steel, which currently has 620 USW-represented employees, said U.S. Steel employees will keep getting the same paychecks, benefits and profit-sharing under new ownership.

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Portage native is up for an Oscar

Hinojosa helped produce Best Picture nominee

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All David Hinojosa, then a kid growing up in Portage, wanted for Christmas was some movie scripts.

His parents, Robert and Rose Hinojosa, had no idea you could even buy screenplays or where you would find them.

Hinojosa took a keen interest in film since his childhood in Northwest Indiana, went on to study at one of the country's top film schools and has produced many highly acclaimed indie movies like "First Reformed," "Beatriz at Dinner" and "Bodies Bodies Bodies." He's now up for an Academy Award. Hinojosa produced "Past Lives," which was nominated for Oscars for Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay.

"We're thrilled to death," his father Robert Hinojosa said. "We knew David was really talented and good. But everything really blew up with 'Past Lives.'"

Written and directed by Celine Song, "Past Lives" follows two childhood friends Na Young and Hae Sung as they grow apart over

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