

# Colbert city council can't get it right when it comes to hiring OK police chief

---

 [us.blastingnews.com/opinion/2017/11/colbert-city-council-cant-get-it-right-when-it-comes-to-hiring-ok-police-chief-002177655.html](https://us.blastingnews.com/opinion/2017/11/colbert-city-council-cant-get-it-right-when-it-comes-to-hiring-ok-police-chief-002177655.html)

Anne Cox

November 19, 2017

David Petersen is the third **interim police chief** that the city council in **Colbert**, OK, has hired in just 12 months. Not only has **Chief** David Petersen's unique spin on being officer friendly been photographed, it has reportedly gone viral after two photos landed on Facebook, according to Blue Lives Matter.

Petersen was photographed in his uniform and seated in his **police** cruiser with two teens, a 17-year-old and an 18-year-old female, standing outside and beside the **Colbert Police Department** vehicle and with each flipping the proverbial "bird" at the camera, KFOR reported.

It wasn't only the teen females giving the middle finger, so, too, was Petersen. Another photo showed the **police chief** with the same teens flanking him – while he posed with an arm around each.

## Third interim chief in a year problematic just like predecessors

---

Squeamish to think about for too long? Consider this: Petersen also has a bit of a **past**. One incident involved an **arrest for embezzlement**, KXII noted. The case was dropped. End of story? Oh, no, though one instance would be easier to chalk up to a bad experience more readily than two instances. Pushmataha County Sheriff's Office also **fired** the most recently hired Colbert **police chief**.

Petersen was **fired** from the Sherriff's office in 2016 for reportedly using one of the county vehicles for his personal use.

KXII cited documents related to Petersen's **termination**, stating that he "gave rides to people who didn't work for the county." What's more is that Petersen used his personal vehicle for professional use.

## Colbert's current chief caused serious accident involving another officer

---

Dewayne Morgan was the **police chief** in Antlers, OK, when Petersen was driving his truck while responding to an official police call about a creepy clown sighting, Blue Lives Matter, noted.

Officers from Antlers were not aware that Petersen was the driver of a speeding truck, so an **officer** pursued him. The officer, in pursuit, **crashed**. The state's highway patrol determined that Petersen was responsible for the crash and cited him. The police unit was totaled.

Morgan stated that Petersen should have "stopped" and informed the Antlers' **officer** that he was backing up **another officer**.

He also said the other **officer** could have been injured quite seriously – due to Petersen and the choice he made to drive his own truck and speed after someone.

## **Town's top cop refused initial comment about conduct**

---

When asked about his **termination** from Pushmataha County Sheriff's Office in 2016, Petersen **declined** to provide any type of explanation to KXII. When asked about the recently posted social media **photos** that soon shocked many Colbert residents, he, again, **declined to comment**. That's a winning spin, but nothing new when caught in an embarrassing situation.

Despite his **past**, and the city council's **history** of selecting interim **police chiefs** that have behaved in ways that are less than stellar, the council hung up the phone on a KXII reporter.

The reporter was doing what a reporter is supposed to do: Asking questions. It's not as if the reporter was flipping off the camera, as well.

Petersen is not fresh out of college. He is a 36-year-old man who should very well know and remember how to act in public, especially in a town that has already had more than its fair share of **chiefs** in one year who had **questionable ethics**.

## **Officer didn't know flipping the 'bird' was photographed, apologized**

---

When Tuesday rolled around, Petersen was ready to give a statement to KTEN. He **apologized**. That's always a good start. A problem enters the picture he paints of his questionable decision-making, however, when he claims that he **did not know** that the **photographs** were taken.

How can that be? If that is the truth, then what was he doing with his arms around teenage females, appearing to pose? It makes no sense.

Colbert resident Charles Davis remarked to KXII about Chief Petersen's **photo** time spent with the teens "disgraceful." Davis asked what many want to know: "What kind of **police** department does that?" A **police** department that appears to have no one on city council endeavoring to prevent such controversial instances from recurrence.

## **Past interim chief a neo-Nazi, city council didn't care**

---

Prior to the city council hiring Petersen, there was Bart Alsbrook. He made national headlines when it was discovered that his **past** involved his entrenchment in **neo-Nazism**. The **city council** didn't fire him when it was brought to members' attention.

Rather, individual members defended Alsbrook and also told several media sources that the council planned to retain him. Alsbrook eventually made the decision for the council. He **resigned** in August. Petersen was hired in September.

Before Alsbrook and Petersen were hired as Colbert's **police chief**, the town had Frank Burrola as its police chief. He was flat-out **fired**. He was insubordinate and didn't turn in proper scheduling and time sheets, news media reported.

Colbert City Council replaced Burrola with the first of its three **interim police chiefs**, Michelle Vannier. She lasted a whopping three days on the job. She was **fired** when it was learned that she was not a certified police officer, according to Blue Lives Matter.

---

## Chief being 'friendly police' flipping the middle finger, made mistake

While **interim police chiefs** come and go in **Colbert**, the residents are subjected to the chiefs' questionable ethics and explanations. Petersen told news media that his intention was not to stir controversy, but "to be a **friendly police** officer after the two girls had said they hated cops," KTEN relayed. He realizes that he should have acted more "professional." He promises to behave in the future. He chalked it up to "being human" and making "**mistakes**, just like everybody else does."

Good point. Petersen made a **mistake**. That mistake justifies wearing a **police** uniform and giving the **middle finger** while there are thousands of people nationwide doing the exact same thing but not in uniform.

Emulating a type of behavior that is disrespectful is not how to foster a commitment toward public service or to engage the public in seeing law enforcement in a positive light.

---

## City council stands by its man

James Coble, a **city council** member, is **standing by** Petersen and empathizes with the police chief. He stated, "All of us get into a stick situation" once in a while, KTEN reported. He further stated that it is "human compassion to give people a **second chance**."

Another valid point. Exactly how many chances will the **city council** have to get it right in the vetting and hiring of an **interim police chief** before, let's say, the state Attorney General's office questions whether the council has any clue what it is even doing in hiring?

---

## Where is respect for the oath officers take?

People are fallible. Police make **mistakes**. The heart of the problem is not whether someone errs or how they recover. The crux of the issue is **ethics**: A chief creative with time sheets, a chief who lacked certification, a chief who was a well-documented, videotaped bigot, and now, and currently a chief who has a history of arrest and causing a serious accident who also mistakenly flipped the “bird” to a camera. Where is the **respect** for the **Police Officer’s Oath**? How can people be expected to respect other human beings who wear a uniform serving the public but who don’t present themselves in the same manner that Petersen has for a camera?

Maybe Petersen did uphold the **oath** and that, on his honor, he did not betray his character when he gave the “bird.” The people of **Colbert** warrant far better than what the **city council** has repeatedly delivered in terms of a qualified public servant who won’t tarnish the profession and the **badge**.

© ALL RIGHTS RESERVED