

Statement From Former Chief Deputy Joe Barile

First and foremost, I would like to sincerely thank everyone for the kind words, support, and concern shown to me. I honestly am at a loss for words. The outpouring of support, encouragement, and kind words that I have received by phone call, text, social media messaging, and the many comments across multiple articles has left me speechless, and I have never felt more loved. The number of people who reached out to me from the community and the Sheriff's Office, past and present, has been so overwhelming that I am still catching up on messages and trying to respond to them, even if only with an "emoji reaction." This is the reason why I will never leave my home county and why I loved serving the community every day. Pouring my heart, soul, and nearly my entire adult life into serving this community still doesn't feel like enough. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for making Flagler County the best place to live and serve. This is my home, this is where my heart is, and this is where I will always be.

After seeing the overwhelming support from the community and my law enforcement family, I feel I owe everyone an explanation of my abrupt and sudden resignation. This is not meant to bash or critique any former or current Sheriff. I did not speak to any of the employees at the Sheriff's Office after my departure to get input or "dirt" and would never put anyone in that position, nor do I feel it is necessary. I am simply informing my community of how I came to my decision and am providing transparency regarding something that I believe the community and the employees of the Sheriff's Office deserve. For the first time in over a year, I feel like I can be myself again: the compassionate, caring, positive, and happy person who sets me apart from others.

I am not oblivious to the fact that resigning so suddenly and abruptly looks suspicious and could fuel speculation that I had done something wrong and resigned in lieu of that coming out. I can assure you that is not the case, and the number of comments from the community that have refuted that possibility, with zero context or comment from me, I believe speaks volumes about my character and reputation. For those who do not want to read this in its entirety, I'll provide you with some quick facts.

- Yes, I did resign abruptly and suddenly on the morning of September 10, 2026, during an unexpected meeting with Sheriff Staly and an HR representative in his office. I, myself, was unaware I was going to resign after taking a vacation and then being out for two days because I was sick.
- No, I did not resign prior to any kind of investigation or IA, or threats of one being opened. I have not done anything that would warrant one. In my almost 20-year career, I have never been issued formal discipline and have only one written reprimand in my

file from 2013 that was the result of horseplay on the radio.

- Yes, I was given the option to resign, which I am thankful Sheriff Staly gave me that opportunity. I could no longer fulfill my role in the way Sheriff Staly expected me to do so. I do not share the same views or opinions as him in many areas, and that is not healthy for any organization.
- Yes, when I accepted the position of Chief Deputy, I was made well aware that I could be let go at any time if the Sheriff felt I was not fulfilling my duties to his expectations. I was aware that there was no chance of a demotion or possibility of me staying employed within the agency in another position if this ever became the case. None of this was hidden from me, and the Sheriff was very blunt and honest about this prior to me accepting the position. He made sure to remind me of this during the meeting where I resigned.
- No, the rumor of me resigning due to accepting a job at Axon is not true. I have never applied for a position with Axon and expressed more times than I can recall to many people that I would never leave my agency for a private-sector job. When I was a commander over the Homeland Security section, we broke off from using the County IT department and contracted our own IT. There was a major hole that needed to be filled when it came to law enforcement technology. The contracted IT company had little to no knowledge of Axon systems, including the body cameras, in-vehicle camera systems, mobile routers, Rapid ID systems, etc. I was tasked with filling this hole due to having a passion for law enforcement technology and self-educating myself on these systems in the past. At one point, I alone transitioned the entire agency from one model of a body camera to the newest model and also rolled out body cameras to the entire jail. I then trained our contracted IT staff as much as I could on these systems and continued to assist them in any way possible, literally up to the morning of my resignation. Due to this, I can see how this rumor would be believable to some. However, the timing and nature of how this rumor began circulating throughout the agency appeared very calculated and unusual. On August 28, I began approved vacation leave, which is why I did not appear next to the Sheriff during a press conference that day. On August 29, I embarked on a cruise and looked forward to being able to decompress and relax. While on the cruise, I received several text messages from team members asking if I was resigning from the agency and had accepted a job with Axon. I have dealt with plenty of rumors and gossip in my career and while in my role as Chief Deputy. Some were so absurd that I could not help but laugh at times. The only conclusion I could ever come to regarding why rumors and gossip were periodically spread about me was because there wasn't anything negative that could be said about my work ethic, dedication to the agency and community, or my performance. If completely false and absurd accusations were the only thing those who didn't like me could say, I was more than okay with that and actually took it as a compliment. But this rumor was very different for a few reasons.

It started while I was away on a cruise, where there was a chance I did not have cell

service and would not be able to address it. It spread rapidly throughout the agency and was somewhat believable based on my history with the technology. During my meeting with the Sheriff, he said he would be more than willing to provide a letter of recommendation for me if I wanted to apply to be a Chief of Police at another agency or apply for a job at a tech company. I had not mentioned my knowledge of the Axon rumor to the Sheriff until he made that comment. In my opinion, if I had resigned suddenly and abruptly with zero rumors ahead of time of me leaving the agency, I am confident most, if not the entire agency, would not believe I resigned without any other influences. The news of my resignation spread rapidly. I assume this was due to the fact that an email and media release were sent out within approximately 10 minutes or less of me being escorted out of the building and driven home to collect items that belonged to the Sheriff's Office. I began receiving texts immediately from dozens of agency members, most making sure I was okay and expressing that they were confused, in disbelief, and did not understand what was going on. I also received several "congratulations" texts and words of encouragement on my "next chapter" with Axon. At that point, I was genuinely impressed that someone had the ability and dedication to circulate a rumor so quickly and in perfect timing with a resignation that only one or two people probably knew about ahead of time, even myself not being one of them. I have no idea how this rumor started or who started it, nor am I confirming that it was part of some elaborate scheme, but even someone without experience as a detective can see something doesn't look right.

- No, I have not accepted or applied for a position at another law enforcement agency and have no intention of doing so or moving out of the county. Flagler County Sheriff's Office will always be my home and family, and the only agency I ever intend on being a part of.
- Yes, I am in a healthy mental state and, for the first time in over a year, can honestly say I feel like I can be myself again.
- Yes, I was provided reasons by the Sheriff that he felt I was no longer fulfilling my obligated duties as Chief Deputy. None of which had anything to do with on-the-job performance, dedication, or disciplinary reasons. The reasons consisted of rumors, speculation, opinionated facts, or concerns that had been addressed and corrected well in the past and were a non-issue for quite some time. The only evaluation meeting I ever had was one that I requested a little over a year into my position and nothing was brought up of great concern that needed to be corrected. Just issues that I had already corrected or minor ones that I needed to work on. I began to work on those issues immediately and actually reached out to those around me for help with them.
- No, I have not provided this information to any media outlets or responded to any of the many requests for additional comments prior to releasing this statement. The only time I spoke to any media was when I contacted Pierre Tristam with Flagler Live to clarify the rumor of me accepting a job with Axon, as well as why I was not present at a recent press conference. He was kind and understanding, which has always been my

experience with him, and immediately updated the article.

- No, I will not engage in any “bashing,” “dirty politics,” or anything of that nature, even if it is done to me. I believe that my own actions and character over my almost 20 years of serving the community that I grew up in and care so deeply about can speak for themselves without having to tear anyone else down. I finally feel like I can be myself again without a constant inner battle and will stay true to that.
- No, I do not regret accepting the position of Chief Deputy and would make the same decision today, even knowing the outcome.
- No, I did not resign just prior to being able to retire. The Florida Retirement System requires either 25 years of service or be 55 years old with 6 years of service in the special risk class (8 years if hired after July 11, 2011) to be able to retire. I would have begun my 20th year of service on January 31, 2027, and I am currently 39 years old.

Below is a more in-depth explanation of why I resigned from my position as Chief Deputy:

I will always give credit where it is due. The Sheriff's Office has progressed forward under the leadership of the current administration. However, when you grow up in an agency and community you serve, you develop a level of compassion and caring that does not allow you to always make decisions with the same approach that someone who is not from the community may have. Some may see this as a weakness, but I always cherished having those qualities help steer me in what I believed to be the right direction.

Those who know me know that since I began my career at 19, I have had the final goal of one day being elected Sheriff by my community. Not for recognition or the title, but to be able to support and serve the community and the Sheriff's Office as best I could. I was not quiet about this goal and even expressed this to Sheriff Staly during a transition meeting with him in 2016, when he held a one-on-one meeting with every employee. Of course, my goal was not to run against Sheriff Staly, but to run once he felt his work had been accomplished and he was ready to try retirement yet again. I knew I had much to learn, and it would not be an easy path, but I was determined to one day accomplish this goal. I truly felt I owed it to the community and my family at the Sheriff's Office for transforming me into the person I am today.

To properly explain my resignation, I feel I need to provide some background information about my time as an appointed staff member at the agency.

In 2021, I was offered the position of Commander, which is an at-will position. During a meeting with Sheriff Staly, I expressed my thanks but made it clear that I would always speak up if I felt something being done was wrong, immoral, or unethical. He expressed that he expected that of me and supported me. I accepted the position.

I continued to pour everything I had into the agency to make our community a safe and beautiful place while also doing everything I could to show my family at the agency how much I appreciated them. For me, Flagler County and the Sheriff's Office are my home. The community and team at the Sheriff's Office is my family.

I did everything I could to show my support and my appreciation to my family at the Sheriff's Office. At one point, I made what I called a "motivation station" in my office. It was by far the cheesiest thing I have ever done, and for those who know me, that is saying a lot. It had snacks, little knickknacks, and a message that I wrote and framed that let everyone know my door was open to them for anything they needed. I received the expected jokes and criticism from the very few negative employees, but I have never let that bother me in the past and was hopeful I could discover why these individuals were so negative and maybe help them have a more positive outlook. I never would have imagined the amount of positive attention it attracted or how many people would stop by to chat or ask for advice. Even if someone came in to joke about how tacky it was, it usually ended in a snack (gluten-free for me, of course) and a good conversation.

Going to an administrative role in an office setting was a difficult transition for me, but I embraced it and tried to keep a healthy balance. I went from being at the ground level with my team on the front lines to watching it on screens in the RTCC. At times, the RTCC staff would see me next to them, only to have me vanish and suddenly see me on scene right in the middle of the action. My love for the career, my community that I served, and the family I served with was at an all-time high.

In 2024, with the support of Sheriff Staly, I was given the amazing opportunity to attend the FBI National Academy. A last-minute spot had opened up, which meant I had a little more than 30 days to get everything done to get accepted. Sheriff Staly, knowing that I was married to the job, had no kids, no wife, and could leave immediately, asked if I could attend. I was beyond grateful for his support and trust in me and graciously accepted the opportunity.

A few nights prior to my graduation in Quantico at the National Academy, Sheriff Staly treated me to dinner and discussed my future at the agency. I was offered the opportunity to skip the rank of Chief and be appointed to the position of Chief Deputy, formerly known as the Undersheriff position. He recalled the conversation we had during the transition meeting where I expressed that one day I wanted to serve my community as their elected Sheriff.

During this dinner, I was humbled, thankful, and honestly, it was very surreal to me. I accepted the offer but remained silent about the position for a little over a month until Sheriff Staly announced it during a monthly general staff meeting. I could see the many different looks and expressions on the appointed staff members' faces. Not all, of course, appeared to be as eager or excited for me to fill this role.

In the beginning, Sheriff Staly was very supportive of my goal of being Sheriff and provided me with some advice politically on how I could one day achieve that goal. He, of course, one day wanting to retire and be able to know the community elected a successor who would continue to

keep the Sheriff's Office the respected and prestigious agency that he had built. I felt supported, privileged, and humbled that he had this trust in me.

I dove into my role as Chief Deputy immediately at full force. Coming up through the ranks so quickly and still being so close to so many members of the agency, I was aware of numerous operational issues and morale issues at the agency that had never made it to Sheriff Staly. He was also aware of things not making it to him, which was one of my responsibilities: to make sure problems were not hidden or blocked and made it to him if they required his attention. Besides the political discussion we had, I was provided little to no on-the-job training on how to fulfill the role of Chief Deputy within the organization.

I will be the first to admit that I have flaws, faults, and plenty to always learn in all aspects of life. Each day is a day to grow, learn, and improve. If you do not learn from your past mistakes, you are doing yourself a disservice and are destined to repeat them. I would like to share some of those flaws, faults, and challenges I faced during my time as Chief Deputy that I was able to learn and grow from.

I went in full speed, trying to fix everything and anything. I thought I would be able to accomplish this by being myself: open, honest, passionate, caring, and willing to speak my mind. That is not only what I was encouraged to do but also what I had signed an agreement to do. I wanted to make the agency a place where everyone loved being there as much as I did and felt supported and appreciated. I also wanted it to be running as efficiently as possible and be able to provide the community the highest level of public safety that they deserved.

I tried to fix things myself early on, make decisions and moves on my own, and inform Sheriff Staly of such things. It was very clear early on that I was not going to be allowed to operate as the person I always was. I was met with disapproval of ideas and decisions, and I soon learned to never mention bad morale or how to improve it.

I consumed my life with my career at a level that, quite honestly, was unsustainable, even for me. I became overwhelmed, stressed, and frustrated quite often. At times, I felt an enormous amount of pressure from above and below me and tried my hardest to create a perfect balance between those above and below me, with me being the mediator in between.

Early on, I had to address an issue with another appointed member of the agency and was told that I should print out the agreement that they signed and present it to them to make sure they remembered what they agreed to. I obtained a copy of the agreement and brought it with me to the meeting. I had an internal battle with myself during the drive there over whether I should approach it that way or not. I felt that if I resorted to that rather than just speaking to them as the family, they had been to me since I was 19 years old, I would not only lose their respect but turn into someone that I was not.

I had the meeting and chose to never present the agreement. There was tension early in the meeting and pushback, and I was honestly thankful for that. It forced me to be the person that I was, have an open and understanding dialogue, and come up with a solution rather than just

being the “boss” and having it be my way or else. I am someone who values others’ input and opinions, especially when they have a skill or knowledge in a specific area that I do not. I do not perceive that as a threat but as an asset.

This was still in the first few months of my promotion, when I was trying to fill the role of a position for which I received little to no training. Not to mention, by skipping the rank of Chief, there were a lot of administrative duties I had never experienced. Unfortunately, this proved to be an impossible task. My stress and frustrations began to come out, and at times, I directed them at the ones I considered my family. At times, I was loud, had a short fuse, and spoke to people in a way that was unprofessional and unacceptable.

I remember the exact conversation I had with someone where I expressed my frustration in that way, in a setting where there were other people. When I walked out of that room, I remember taking a second to calm down, walk out of the building, and gather my thoughts. I remember replaying my actions in my head. I had never been more embarrassed, disgusted with myself, or disappointed in myself than I was at that point in my life. I was turning into the person that I was supposed to be ensuring didn’t exist in the organization, and there was no excuse for it. I had witnessed that same kind of behavior firsthand by others in the past and refused to become that person.

It was at that time that I decided to make a change. I met with the individual that I had spoken to that way and apologized for my unacceptable behavior. That person was so kind that they tried to give me an excuse for my behavior due to the amount of stress I was probably under. I did not allow him to let me use that excuse and told him that it was unacceptable and would not happen again. The fact that he tried to stick up for me for my own behavior meant a lot to me and was even more of a wake-up call. This individual looked past my behavior and was able to remember who I truly was and how much I truly cared about everyone. I truly needed to see that and am forever thankful for that conversation.

I also apologized to each person who had witnessed my behavior toward him and expressed that it was unacceptable and would not happen again.

After that conversation, I had some one-on-one meetings as well as a group meeting with command staff and higher-ranking personnel to apologize for my behavior. I asked for honest feedback on what I could do to improve myself and support them. I am forever thankful for those conversations and the honest input from each person that I needed to hear.

From that moment on, I felt a weight lifted off me, slowed down, and made sure to be the person that I truly was, the person who deeply cared about the health and well-being of everyone around me and wanted to cultivate an environment where people wanted to be. I informed Sheriff Staly of all of this and did not try to hide it. He was supportive that I was able to recognize what had to be corrected and that I took steps to fix it. He, too, encouraged me to slow down, evaluate things, and factor in everything before making a decision.

I periodically met with individuals who I knew would be honest with me to make sure I had not again steered away from the person that I truly was. Each person that I spoke to expressed that the change was appreciated, felt genuine, and that there were no issues or concerns. I asked that if they ever felt I began to sway the other way again, they immediately let me know as bluntly as possible. I never wanted to be that person again.

This was well over a year ago, and I can say with confidence that I did not act that way again. I even followed up on some phone conversations that could have been perceived in ways that were not intended with an in-person meeting. Each time, I was informed by them that they did not feel mistreated or spoken to poorly and were thankful I took the time to follow up with them.

When you spend nearly your entire adult life at an agency, it becomes a part of you and the people become like family. Whether it be parental figures, sibling-like relationships, or even a distant relative who doesn't care for you too much, all of these relationships will form.

Not everyone at the agency, past or present, has rooted for me to succeed, and I know there are some who would love to see me fail. However, I am confident that an overwhelming majority are supportive, wish to see me succeed, and are there for me as a person and teammate. I can say this because of the number of interactions I would have on a daily basis.

I took pride in the fact that no matter what rank I ever became, every person knew they could approach me with anything they had to say and that I genuinely cared. This happened daily with employees from every area of the Sheriff's Office, and I truly cherished those relationships.

I, to this day, do not believe anyone tried to take advantage of my friendship while I was in my role as Chief Deputy. I say this because I always encouraged people to speak up, and if it's an easy fix, I would do everything I could to ensure everyone was happy and healthy. I also made sure that each person knew that if it was an operational issue, they were to address that with their chain of command. But I can honestly say, not a single person tried to circumvent their chain and gain "favoritism."

I could provide dozens of examples of the "favors" I was asked for, but I'll simply give one to provide context.

Some employees showed me what the drinking water looked like that came from the water fountains and bottle-fill stations. Honestly, the water bottle I used was not clear, so I never noticed how absolutely disgusting the water was until they showed me. I was appalled and embarrassed at the quality of the drinking water being provided.

I did research and discovered that the water fountains and bottle-fill stations that were installed in the building never had a filtration system installed on them. This was immediately corrected, and employees now had acceptable water to consume. Without that relationship and the employees feeling comfortable approaching me with this concern, such an easily correctable problem that could have literally resulted in health issues may never have been addressed.

I was often accused of “favoritism” by some people due to actions like these. If that’s the case, then yes, I showed favoritism to every person in the agency who ever reached out for help because I genuinely care.

While being in the position of Chief Deputy, I was encouraged to attend leadership conferences and was even provided a leadership coach (leadership coach may be the wrong title, but I cannot recall exactly what it was called) to have online meetings with to help develop my leadership skills.

Honestly, I felt being pulled away from my agency and community to go to conferences out of the county was not nearly as beneficial as having on-the-job training from someone who has been in law enforcement for over 50 years. Unfortunately, Sheriff Staly was extremely busy with events, meetings, and conferences that very often took him outside of the county and even the state. He expressed to me that he did not have the time to mentor or train me and encouraged me to attend these conferences and provided the leadership coach.

I can confidently say that I did not benefit from most of the conferences and informed Sheriff Staly of this. My time would have been better spent at the agency and in the community obtaining on-the-job experience, even if I couldn’t receive one-on-one training.

The leadership coach sessions were very similar. The sessions required me to come to them with challenges or issues to discuss. In my opinion, if you have lingering challenges or problems that you have refused to address, you are doing yourself and everyone around you a disservice. Because of this, when a challenge or problem arose, I immediately addressed it. Whether this meant solving it with the knowledge, experience, and skills I possessed or reaching out to a teammate who could help, I made sure to do it as soon as possible. This led to me not having much to discuss during these meetings.

In my opinion, it is difficult to always see your own flaws and faults and can become blind to them. This is why I encourage and welcome input from others. If I am unaware of a problem, whether it be with myself or anything else, there is no way to correct it, improve, grow, and learn.

I asked my coach if he had discovered any possible issues that I could address by him speaking to the other leaders that he was having sessions with. My coach said that the other leaders expressed that there were no issues, everything was going well, and he could not offer me any advice or insight on any areas I needed to improve on that he was aware of. This was in my last session that was approximately three weeks ago.

My coach and I agreed that the meetings were not beneficial at this point, and at his direction, I had intended to speak to the Sheriff about this but never got that opportunity to speak to him in person due to scheduling conflicts. I was told these sessions were confidential, and I cannot confirm anything I said was ever repeated outside those meetings, but at times, the few issues that I did bring up appeared to be “addressed” in one way or another shortly after those meetings.

One of those issues I brought up was that I felt I was not allowed to make any decisions or have any input about even the most minor operational decisions.

I want to make it very clear that I am not accusing Sheriff Staly of ever being unethical or doing anything illegal or anything remotely close. He also never asked me to do anything of the sort. This was never the case. Simply put, his morals and values differ from mine in many ways, which put me in a position that I could no longer carry out my duties as Chief Deputy the way he required.

The below are some of MY values, and I am not speaking for his. I am confident that the men and women at the Sheriff's Office are already aware of these because I never had to put them on paper; I practiced them on a continuous basis. But I feel the public should also know who I am and what I believe in. I am confident many of those at the agency can provide personal experiences of where I displayed these values.

- I believe in treating employees like people, not tools. I value their time, commitment, and dedication, and encourage them to spend time with their family and loved ones and not let the career consume their entire life. I don't believe in creating unrealistic expectations and overworking my team in all roles, sworn and civilian. Civilian roles in law enforcement organizations are often some of the most overworked and undervalued positions. These roles are vital to an organization, and their health and well-being should not be ignored.
- I truly value the input of others, encourage it, and believe it is necessary for an organization to thrive. I am not scared to ask others, no matter what rank, for help if they have more knowledge or skill in a certain area.
- I believe in promoting and awarding specialized positions to those who have earned them through the required process, their work record, and dedication. I do not believe in skipping someone for a promotion, denying someone a specialized unit assignment, or reassigning someone to another position simply because of one or two interactions with someone that rubbed me the wrong way. I was always very aware that some members of the Sheriff's Office just did not like me and would hear some of the things said about me. However, I never let this influence a decision or recommendation I made. Whether it was a promotion, assignment as a field training officer, assignment to a specialized unit, or anything else, I would seek input from others to determine if that opportunity was earned and was the right one for the organization.
- I don't believe in using employees, citizens, or anyone as political pawns.
- I don't believe in treating citizens simply as a vote and disregarding the ones who cannot vote. I swore to serve and protect everyone, not just those who can benefit me.
- I do not believe in publicly shaming people, adults and juveniles, who made one poor decision and putting it on social media as a trophy. Especially if that person is going

through a mental health crisis. We are there to serve and protect the community, not shame and ridicule them.

- I would never auction off my Chief Deputy for a date at a Gala in front of hundreds of people without his prior knowledge or permission and publicly tell everyone that he was stood up for the dinner and put him in such an embarrassing, uncomfortable, and demeaning position, putting a literal price tag on him, even if I knew he would be a good sport about it and make sure it didn't reflect negatively on me in such a public and prestigious event.

When I was being escorted out of Sheriff Staly's office, I paused, gathered myself, and said to him, "This is my home." And I truly meant it.

This is my home, and you are all my family, and no one will take that from me. I do not know what my next chapter holds, but I do know that I will continue to be involved in my community.

So, when you see me at one of the many community events that I attend because I truly enjoy going to them (not just for a photo op. I don't think I am a very photogenic person, haha), it may be a little harder to spot me without a uniform. But if you do, please don't hesitate to come say hi!

From the bottom of my heart, thank you to everyone that has made the last almost 20 years of my life so rewarding.

To those who want me to fade off into the sunset and disappear, you will be disappointed, because I'm not fucking leaving.

*Joe Barile *411*