



Youngsville

City of Youngsville
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September 8, 2026

Honorable Liz Murrill
Attorney General
State of Louisiana
Attn: Civil Division
P.O. Box 94005
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Re: Request for Attorney General Opinion — Respective Authority of Mayor, Elected Chief of Police, and Municipal Police Civil Service Board in the City of Youngsville

Dear Attorney General Murrill:

I respectfully request an Attorney General Opinion concerning the respective authority and responsibilities of the Mayor, elected Chief of Police, and Municipal Police Civil Service Board when the City Administration receives a workplace complaint from a classified police employee concerning alleged conduct by another employee or official of the Youngsville Police Department.

The present circumstances involve allegations concerning Youngsville's unclassified Assistant Chief of Police. However, the City seeks broader guidance regarding the process that should be followed whenever City Administration receives a workplace complaint from a classified police employee, including the extent to which the City may receive, process, investigate, or otherwise respond to such a complaint without encroaching upon personnel authority vested by Louisiana law in Youngsville's independently elected Chief of Police.

The City seeks this guidance to ensure that workplace complaints are handled appropriately, the City's legal and financial interests are protected, and the rights of classified employees are respected, while at the same time ensuring that neither the Mayor nor City Administration exercises authority reserved by law to the elected Chief of Police.

Applicable Statutory Framework

The City of Youngsville is a Lawrason Act municipality with an elected Chief of Police.

R.S. 33:404(A)(1) generally provides that the mayor shall supervise and direct the administration and operation of municipal departments, offices, and agencies, but expressly excludes "a police

department with an elected chief of police.” The statute therefore recognizes a distinction between the Mayor's general administrative authority over municipal government and the authority of an independently elected Chief of Police.

Additionally, the Legislature has enacted a statute specifically governing police personnel authority in the City of Youngsville.

R.S. 33:423.23, entitled *City of Youngsville; disciplinary action by chief of police*, provides:

“Notwithstanding the provisions of R.S. 33:423 or any other law to the contrary, in and for the city of Youngsville, the chief of police shall appoint, promote, discipline, and dismiss police personnel subject to the budgetary limitations of the mayor and city council, pertaining to the number of allotted positions of the police department.”

The statute further provides that a police department employee may make a direct appeal to the City of Youngsville Civil Service Board, which “shall have the authority to modify or reverse any actions of the chief of police.”

The Legislature has also specifically addressed the position of Assistant Chief of Police in Youngsville.

R.S. 33:2571 provides that, notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the position of Assistant Chief of Police in the municipalities of Broussard, Carencro, Scott, and Youngsville “shall be in the unclassified service.” The statute further provides that:

“The right of selection, appointment, supervision, and discharge for the position shall be vested in the chief of police of the city.”

Thus, in Youngsville, the Assistant Chief of Police is expressly excluded from the classified civil service, and his selection, appointment, supervision, and discharge are expressly vested in the elected Chief of Police.

At the same time, Youngsville's classified police employees are subject to the Municipal Police Civil Service Law.

Among the duties assigned to the Municipal Police Civil Service Board, R.S. 33:2477(4) provides that the Board shall, at the direction of the Mayor, Chief of Police, or other persons specified therein, or upon its own motion, conduct investigations concerning the administration of personnel or compliance with the Municipal Fire and Police Civil Service Law.

R.S. 33:2477(5), separately, authorizes the Board to conduct investigations and pass upon complaints by or against officers or employees in the classified service for purposes specified therein. R.S. 33:2477(6) further directs the Board to hear and pass upon matters brought before it by the Mayor, among others.

Circumstances Giving Rise to This Request

City Administration received a written workplace complaint from a regular, permanent employee of the Youngsville Police Department who is a member of the classified civil service.

The complaint raises allegations concerning workplace environment, retaliation, grievance handling, personnel actions, and alleged misuse of departmental resources. Certain allegations concern conduct attributed to Youngsville's Assistant Chief of Police, who is an unclassified employee appointed by and serving under the elected Chief of Police pursuant to R.S. 33:2571.

The complaint also alleges that a personnel action involving the classified employee occurred after the employee had submitted a workplace complaint and previously utilized an internal grievance process.

Upon receiving the initial complaint, the Mayor notified the elected Chief of Police that City Administration had received the complaint. The Mayor explained that because the complaint raised employment-related concerns involving a municipal employee, the City could be required to respond in its capacity as municipal employer to an administrative charge, employment claim, public-records request, insurance inquiry, or litigation arising from the complaint.

The Mayor therefore requested preservation of potentially relevant records and advised that the City had an interest in ensuring that relevant records were preserved and that no retaliatory action was taken because an employee made or participated in a workplace complaint or related process.

At the same time, the Mayor expressly advised the Chief that the notice was not intended to direct police operations, control an internal affairs matter, or substitute the judgment of the Mayor or City Administration for authority assigned to the Chief under state law.

The Mayor specifically acknowledged R.S. 33:423.23 and stated that police-personnel decisions regarding appointment, promotion, discipline, and dismissal remained within the Chief's authority, subject to applicable Civil Service Board appeal rights. The Mayor further stated that the notice did not prevent legitimate operational or disciplinary action within the Chief's authority when based upon documented, non-retaliatory reasons and expressly stated that the notice was not a directive regarding the outcome of any police-personnel matter.

The classified employee subsequently submitted a supplemental complaint requesting an independent investigation into the allegations, preservation of relevant records, appropriate corrective or disciplinary action if warranted, notification regarding the outcome, and consideration of certain interim measures. The employee has also indicated an intention to seek an investigation before the Youngsville Municipal Police Civil Service Board.

The City does not seek to determine through this opinion request whether any allegation is true or whether any employee engaged in misconduct. Nor does the City seek authority for the Mayor or City Administration to appoint, promote, discipline, dismiss, supervise, or otherwise exercise personnel authority over police personnel where such authority is vested by law in the elected Chief of Police.

Rather, the City seeks guidance concerning what process it may or must follow when City Administration receives a workplace complaint from a classified police employee concerning another employee or official of the Police Department.

The present circumstances raise an additional question because the employee whose alleged conduct is at issue is the unclassified Assistant Chief of Police, whose supervision is expressly vested in the elected Chief pursuant to R.S. 33:2571. However, similar questions may arise in the future from complaints involving classified officers, supervisors, or other Police Department personnel.

Accordingly, the City seeks guidance that will allow it to establish a lawful and consistent procedure applicable to workplace complaints involving Police Department employees generally, while recognizing any additional statutory limitations that apply when the subject of a complaint is the unclassified Assistant Chief of Police.

Questions Presented

Accordingly, I respectfully request your opinion on the following questions:

1. Under R.S. 33:404, R.S. 33:423.23, and other applicable Louisiana law, what authority and responsibility does the Mayor or City Administration have when City Administration receives a workplace complaint from a classified police employee alleging retaliation, hostile work environment, improper grievance handling, misuse of municipal or departmental resources, or other improper employment conduct involving another employee or official of the Youngsville Police Department?
2. May City Administration receive, document, process, and conduct or commission independent factual investigation of such a workplace complaint for the limited purposes of determining compliance with applicable employment laws and City policies, preserving and protecting the City's legal and financial interests, responding to potential administrative or judicial claims, and assessing potential municipal liability, provided that neither the Mayor nor City Administration appoints, promotes, disciplines, dismisses, or otherwise exercises personnel authority reserved to the elected Chief of Police under R.S. 33:423.23?
3. If such independent fact-finding is permissible, may it be conducted by appropriate City administrative personnel, the City Attorney, or an independent third-party investigator, and may the resulting factual findings be provided to the elected Chief of Police for his consideration and for any personnel action the Chief determines appropriate pursuant to his statutory authority?
4. Does the answer to Questions 1 through 3 differ when the employee whose conduct is the subject of the complaint is the unclassified Assistant Chief of Police, whose "selection, appointment, supervision, and discharge" are expressly vested in the Chief of Police pursuant to R.S. 33:2571?
5. Specifically, may City Administration receive, process, or conduct or commission independent factual investigation of a workplace complaint concerning the Assistant Chief for the limited

purposes described above without improperly exercising “supervision” over the Assistant Chief that R.S. 33:2571 reserves to the elected Chief of Police, provided that City Administration does not direct, discipline, discharge, or otherwise exercise personnel authority over the Assistant Chief?

6. Alternatively, or concurrently, may the Mayor direct the Youngsville Municipal Police Civil Service Board, pursuant to R.S. 33:2477(4), to investigate allegations arising from a workplace complaint insofar as those allegations concern the administration of personnel or compliance with the Municipal Police Civil Service Law affecting a classified employee?

7. In an investigation pursuant to R.S. 33:2477 concerning the administration of personnel affecting a classified employee, may the Civil Service Board investigate conduct attributed to another Police Department employee or official to the extent necessary to determine whether the classified employee's civil service rights or personnel administration were improperly affected?

8. If the employee whose conduct is at issue is unclassified, including the Assistant Chief of Police, may the Civil Service Board nevertheless make factual findings concerning that conduct insofar as necessary to determine whether the classified employee's civil service rights or personnel administration were affected, while leaving any supervision, discipline, or discharge of the unclassified employee to the elected Chief of Police as required by applicable law?

9. To the extent the Civil Service Board determines that an action affecting a classified employee was improper, what authority does the Board possess under R.S. 33:2477 and R.S. 33:423.23 to modify, reverse, or otherwise remedy that action while preserving the Chief of Police's statutory personnel authority?

10. Does the Mayor's responsibility to protect the legal and financial interests of the municipality permit the Mayor, City Attorney, or other appropriate City administrative personnel to take administrative measures such as receiving and documenting a workplace complaint, notifying the Chief that a complaint has been received, preserving or requesting preservation of municipal records, responding to administrative charges or litigation, communicating applicable anti-retaliation requirements, consulting with legal counsel, and taking other measures reasonably necessary to protect the City's legal interests without those actions constituting prohibited supervision or control of the Police Department or its personnel?

11. Finally, what process best conforms to Louisiana law when City Administration receives a workplace complaint involving Police Department personnel, so that the City may appropriately address its responsibilities as a municipal employer while preserving the statutory authority of the elected Chief of Police and, where applicable, the jurisdiction of the Municipal Police Civil Service Board?

Purpose of Request

The City of Youngsville seeks this guidance in good faith to establish a clear, consistent, and legally appropriate procedure for handling workplace complaints involving Police Department employees now and in the future.

The City recognizes and intends to respect the Legislature's express allocation of authority. R.S. 33:423.23 specifically places appointment, promotion, discipline, and dismissal of Youngsville police personnel with the elected Chief of Police. R.S. 33:2571 further expressly places the unclassified Assistant Chief's selection, appointment, supervision, and discharge with the Chief.

At the same time, R.S. 33:2477 expressly assigns responsibilities concerning classified police personnel administration to the Municipal Police Civil Service Board and authorizes certain investigations at the direction of the Mayor. Additionally, workplace complaints received by City Administration may create legal, financial, record-preservation, insurance, or litigation responsibilities for the municipality independent of the ultimate personnel authority vested in the Chief of Police.

The City therefore seeks guidance regarding how these statutes and responsibilities should operate together and, specifically, where the line should be drawn between permissible municipal administrative action or fact-finding and the personnel authority Louisiana law reserves to the elected Chief of Police.

Again, this request does not ask the Attorney General to determine the truth or credibility of any pending allegations, adjudicate an employee grievance, or determine whether discipline is warranted against any individual. The City seeks only an interpretation of the respective statutory authority and procedural responsibilities of the governmental actors involved so that Youngsville may establish and follow an appropriate process in this matter and in future matters.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me or City Attorney Wade Trahan should your office require additional information or documentation.

Respectfully,



Ken Ritter, Mayor
City of Youngsville

cc: Wade Trahan, City Attorney