

City of Rockledge Police Department

Chief Joseph P. LaSata



Four Year Strategic Plan

Years 2016-2019



Chief LaSata Swearing-in a Group of New Officers

(Left to Right: Officers Garcia, Strickland, Garner)

Our vision is to be a model law enforcement agency providing a safe environment for all those who live, work, or visit our community.

Leadership Philosophy and Mutual Expectations



The purpose of this document is twofold. First, I want to share my leadership philosophy with you. Second, I want to outline what I believe are the mutual obligations we have to each other, our chosen profession, the Police Department, and the citizens of Rockledge.

In order to achieve organizational and operational excellence we must be true to each other and ourselves. Leaders in our organization have a responsibility to mentor their subordinates even when it may be painful to do so. Far too often we tell people what we think they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. Likewise, subordinates share a responsibility to be honest and open with their leaders. I will maintain honest and open communication with each of you and my expectation is that you will be open and honest with me.

The law enforcement profession exists to provide services to the citizens who are our “external customers” and we must ensure that they receive the quality of service that they deserve and expect. Fact remains, we are employed for our citizens and ultimately, they are the ones who provide the funding which sustains our existence. It is equally important to remember that the other divisions of the police department are our “internal customers.” We should extend to members of other divisions the same level of responsive and quality service that we expect. The term public service is synonymous with **professionalism**, which serves as one of the core values for how we do business.

We must remember that we do not operate in a perfect environment. It is easy to cast blame, but it is far more difficult to offer effective coaching when mistakes are made. In our roles as mentors, we need to recognize when a non-malicious mistake has occurred and give the mistake back to the person who made the mistake so they may make the appropriate corrective action or behavior and learn from the experience.

Although policy violations will receive close scrutiny, our Standard Operating Procedures serve as an operational guide. If you should inadvertently violate a provision of our SOP’s while performing your duties in accordance with good judgment and our core values, the technical violation becomes less important.

We must always remember that our professionalism transcends us personally. We owe it to those who came before us, and those who will follow us, to perform our duties with honor and leave our department better than how we found it. We do our profession the ultimate disservice when we see a defect in the organization and fail to correct the deficiency or let someone of higher authority know about it. Equally important is we should constantly seek to get better. We should

always challenge the way we do business and look for better, more efficient and effective ways of doing business. Engage in critical thinking to improve our organization, our profession, and ourselves.

The following are our goals and objectives as a police department to guide our behavior as an organization during the next four years. These goals and objectives are more critical now than ever before in policing.

- A. Respect and Courtesy**- I will strive to extend respect and courtesy to each of you at all times. I will reprimand in private and praise in public. As difficult as it may seem at times, as is the case of suspects and arrestees, who may not extend the same courtesy to you, we all have an obligation to be courteous during all work related encounters. By being respectful and courteous you will reduce complaints and you will “never be wrong.” Respect and courtesy should be the rule of the day and not the exception.
- B. Attitude**- I cannot stress enough the importance of maintaining a positive attitude. I am aware how difficult this can be in an environment that requires us to work shifts, attend court, constantly assist people in need, and deal with the “administration.” Although I wish I had not, there were times in my career when I allowed the conditions of work, failure to get promoted, or an overbearing supervisor dictate the tone of my attitude. Maintaining a positive attitude gets easier when we realize the only thing we can truly control is ourselves. Law enforcement personnel always have difficulty with this because oftentimes our jobs require us to take control. Don’t carry around thoughts and perceptions that have a negative effect on your attitude. If you don’t share these issues with someone, a negative attitude will only feed upon itself. Remember at the end of the day we have our families and ourselves. As much as we enjoy our jobs, it is only a temporary state; allowing the job to set the tone for our attitude is clearly a mistake. Every career has highs and lows. How we conduct ourselves in the face of adversity truly defines who we are and how successful we will be professionally.
- C. Professionalism**- Professionalism should be our focus as we move our agency forward. Our actions, efforts, and decisions should be based on rationality and professionalism. All of my efforts and decisions will be based on what I think and believe will help us facilitate the accomplishment of our mission and not based on personalities. Moral and professional courage demand that we selflessly do the right things, for the right reasons, even when no one is watching. Collectively we can have a tremendous influence in advancing law enforcement as a profession. As you make the decisions that govern your interactions with the public you may ask yourself, “What would the Chief do?” I can tell you that if it is right for our City and right for the citizen, then you conducted yourself to my satisfaction.

- D. Moral Courage**- When once asked, “What is the most important character attribute that a law enforcement officer or support person should possess? I replied “Moral courage.” It is a difficult term to describe, but in essence it means taking a position even if it is unpopular when it is the right thing to do; it means defending those who have no one to defend them. It is far easier to “run with the pack,” this is not an option in our profession. When we fail to demonstrate moral courage our profession suffers and we see destructive problems like abuse of authority, corruption, and violation of civil rights.
- E. Leadership**- It will be my goal to lead by example. Leading by example will also be the goal of all supervisors in this agency. Although we all have different organizational responsibilities, leaders in this department should not expect subordinates to perform tasks that they themselves would not perform. I will provide active leadership, but will allow subordinate leaders and their staff to perform their duties without the interference of micromanagement. Leaders should feel compelled to offer constructive criticism, but should also be willing to receive it. I want myself and all of our supervisors to be the type of leaders who can proudly advance our agency. Everyone in the agency, regardless of assignment, is a leader. Our City looks to us for leadership and I am confident we will continue to provide it.
- F. Communication**- I need to be an effective communicator and the best way to do that is to focus on listening rather than speaking. I want all of you to feel that our organization encourages and fosters free, open, and honest communications. We need to place equal importance on top to bottom communications, bottom to top communications, as well as lateral communications within the organization. I will communicate regularly my vision for the organization, my expectations, and my concerns. Everyone should feel obligated to communicate issues of concern and any methods you feel will improve the organization. Do not let concerns fester, communicate them and it will make all of us more effective. Sometimes, honest communications can be painful, but we owe it to each other. The root of all organizational problems can usually be traced to poor or non-existent communication.
- G. Rumors and Gossip**- It is difficult to eliminate rumors and gossip in the work place. We must remember often rumors and gossip can be hurtful, especially when members of our organization are the victims. Engaging in rumor and gossip is a wrong behavior, it detracts from our professionalism and can have a negative impact on morale. At one time or another, most of us have engaged in the spreading of a rumor or gossiping, it is certainly nothing to be proud of.
- H. Empathy and Compassion**- Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else’s position and see things from their perspective. Compassion is concern for another

person's suffering. I will always strive to be empathetic and compassionate in my dealing with each of you. Each of you should try to emulate these qualities when interacting with the public and members of your work group. The truth is, if we ever lose the ability to be empathetic and compassionate, coming to work becomes almost impossible.

- I. **“There is nothing I can do”**- The absolute last thing our citizens want to hear when they call us for assistance is “there is nothing I can do.” They become frustrated because calling law enforcement may have been their last resort. I pledge to you I will never say “there is nothing I can do” when you come to see me with an issue and my expectation is that you will never say it to one of our citizens. If you respond to a call for service and honestly feel there is nothing you can do to help, please tell them you will have the Chief contact them. Leave me a message and I will follow-up. We should make every effort to do something for our citizens when they call us, even if it as simple as listening, offering advice, or linking them up with social services.

- J. **Know your strengths, but understand your weaknesses**- It is easy to articulate our strengths and the things we do well. It is far more difficult to understand our own weaknesses and take steps to address them. Take a personal inventory, honestly assess your weaknesses, and devise a plan to improve.

- K. **Success empowers us, but failure defines us.** As I have alluded to earlier, it is easy to predict how we will react when successful, e.g. receiving a promotion, graduating, receiving an award. The key is how we react to adversity. Those who stand up quickly after being knocked down are those who will, at some point, experience success. Conversely, those in leadership positions will, at some point, be required to administer negative discipline. When discipline is required, leaders will make every effort to encourage and help the recipient of the discipline to learn and get back on their feet.

- L. **Standards of Conduct**- All of us must act in a professional manner at all times. Remember, we represent our agency twenty-four hours a day. Everyone in the organization will have an equal opportunity to succeed. Sexual harassment or discrimination in any form will not be tolerated at any level. There are few issues that require organizational “zero tolerance” response; sexual harassment and/or discrimination in any form are examples of such issues.

- M. **Off Duty Conduct**- We have chosen a profession that requires all of us to conduct our personal lives in an exemplary manner. Often times this seems unfair because we are all human and we all have the potential to make the wrong choices in our personal lives. Everything we do off duty is a reflection on our agency and whatever we do, or not do,

off duty will be scrutinized by other members of our profession and, of course, by members of the media. Do not become involved in off duty conduct which reflects poorly on our agency or our profession.

- N. **Support of Each Other**- It is critical now more than ever to support each other in all we do. Today a law enforcement career is difficult and there will be many occasions when we need to support each other professionally, emotionally, personally and at times even spiritually. My commitment to you is I will always support you in any way I can and to defend you when required. The only time I will withdraw my support is when I feel you have acted unethically, maliciously, or with evil intent. Likewise, I expect you to support our leadership team. I realize it may be difficult to support management at all times, but I hope you feel it is imperative to do so unless you feel management has acted unethically or maliciously.

- O. **Honesty**- We need to be honest at all times. More importantly, we need to be honest with ourselves. Honesty is another example of an area requiring an organizational zero-tolerance approach. The simple fact is that lying in relation to our official duties is unacceptable and will result in the harshest organizational response possible. Many years ago a wise Sergeant told me it is far better to say, “I made a mistake boss” than to make a mistake and lie about it.

- P. **Pride**- We should strive to create and maintain an organization of which we can be proud to be a member. Consider we do not operate in a vacuum and our actions may potentially affect surrounding agencies. Remember there is a significant difference between organizational pride and arrogance.

- Q. **Always Take the Time for People**- We should always feel compelled to take the time to talk with our citizens and not give them the impression they are just another number. Remember, the perception of what we do is often more important than what we actually did. I have served with some of the law enforcement officers who would take as much time talking with a transient person as they would with a City Council member. If you take the time, you may forget the encounter, but the citizen never will.

- R. **Appearance and Physical Appearance**- The personal appearance of everyone in the organization should set the standard for the profession. I encourage each of you to maintain some form of physical fitness program. All research indicates there is a positive relationship between good physical fitness, good performance, and self-esteem. Unfortunately, we are judged by our appearance by the public. If our appearance does not appear neat and professional, the impression we leave will be negative.

- S. Safety**- Unsafe acts cannot be tolerated and each of you at every level has an obligation to correct them if you become aware of them. If you see an unsafe act and you take action to stop it, you will have unequivocal support.
- T. Recognition**- I will always try to recognize and reward excellence. I expect our supervisors and command staff to do the same.
- U. Promotions**- I will make promotional decisions based on what I think is best for our organization and our citizens. We place too much emphasis on promotions in our profession, but this is the system we operate in. Professionally, there are few things as depressing and disheartening as being passed over for promotion. My experience has been that candidates who do not get promoted draw more attention than those who do. An individual's response to adversity shows true character and attitude. We do not look to the ones selected for promotion; we already know how they will react. Recently, law enforcement executives were surveyed to determine what attributes they assess the most when making promotional decisions. Surprisingly, the executives replied they did not look to technical or tactical expertise, or even seniority. They replied the most important attribute when evaluating an employee for promotion was "ATTITUDE." However, I do take education, experience, evaluations, commendations and discipline into consideration. It has to be said that promotion and rank do not necessarily indicate professional success. I have known law enforcement officers with rank who I do not consider professionally successful and others who I consider extremely successful, but never made rank of sergeant.
- V. Decision Making**- I will seek input when making decisions that affect the organization. As Chief, one of my responsibilities is to render all final organizational decisions of a significant nature. Whether or not you agreed with them, my decision will be ethical and based on what I believe is best for the community and our organization. My expectation is for you to respond professionally and to support these decisions.
- W. Chain of Command**- In a law enforcement agency the strict principle of chain of command is not feasible at all times. As your Chief, I will encourage an "open door" policy. In formal matters we need to recognize professionalism demands keeping your immediate supervisor informed by utilizing the "chain of command." There have been organizations that have collapsed under the weight of this process. If an urgent situation arises and you can justify deviating from the agencies chain of command policy, by all means do so.

- X. Discipline**- We should use both positive reinforcement and consequences for negative behavior regarding discipline in the work environment. Supervisors should not shirk their responsibility to address issues regarding the application of negative discipline.
- Y. Education**- We must educate ourselves and stay current with changing trends if we want to be considered professional. Education can occur in many forms including, but not limited to, formal education, in-service training, and attendance at various seminars, self-study and lectures. Education should not be limited to the field of criminal justice, but should include disciplines such as business administration, finance and accounting, informational science or administration. In today's environment, formal college education is becoming a requirement for advancement.
- Z.** The following thoughts do not fall into a specific category, but are important and should be mentioned:
1. Loyalty is a two-way street.
 2. Respectful disagreement is not disrespect
 3. The establishment of a "psychological contract" is an important function of supervision at all levels. As Chief, I will tell my supervisors where they stand and I expect them to do the same with their assigned personnel.
 4. If what you do is good for the citizens of our City, then it is good for the Rockledge Police Department and me.
 5. Give everyone a chance to succeed.
 6. Remember, "Service first, self-second." Never short change our citizens, even when you receive a call for service 10 minutes before the end of your shift.

The mechanisms of measurement concerning organizational compliance with the aforementioned goals and objectives will be threefold, citizens' complaints, or lack thereof, positive correspondence from our residents, and responses from our online citizen survey.

I encourage you to review this document periodically. There will be occasions when I modify this document in which case I will forward any changes to you.

Thank you for your time,

Joseph P. LaSata

Chief of Police

VISION

To be a model law enforcement agency providing a safe environment for all those who live, work, or visit our community by doing the right things at the right time for the right reasons.....always.

MISSION

Partnering with our community to improve quality of life by reducing crime and fear through enhanced partnerships and by being responsive to citizen's needs at all times.

CORE VALUES

- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Professionalism
- ✓ Fairness
- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Service
- ✓ Loyalty
- ✓ Compassion

We also value...

- ✓ Self-Discipline
- ✓ Innovation
- ✓ Neatness
- ✓ Leadership
- ✓ Moral courage
- ✓ Courtesy / Customer service

What our values represent

Integrity: We hold and honor ethical behavior as the foundation of our existence.

Professionalism: As an employee of the Rockledge Police Department, you are part of a recognized, professional agency. Make certain your conduct contributes to our professional image and reputation. If one person tarnishes the badge, it tarnishes the badges of all who wear it.

Fairness: Deliver service to all persons without consideration for their age, gender, ethnicity, religion, national origin, etc. Avoid practices that lead to disparate impacts on segments of the community. Prohibit racial profiling, sexual harassment or misconduct, and quotas or other incentives for arrests, citations, or tickets generating revenue.

Safety: We shall aggressively attack criminal behavior and promote crime prevention strategies in the protection of life and property. Emphasize de-escalation and alternatives to arrest, interagency collaboration, shared services, and regional training.

Service: We are committed to being proactive problem solvers and providing individualized assistance. Avoid tactics that stigmatize youth, while supporting youth leadership and life skills training, and provide incentives for officers to involve themselves as role models for youth.

Loyalty: We will build trust through effective relationship building.

Compassion: Your professional life will cross paths with many people whose lives have been racked with pain, suffering, and trauma. Offer them empathy, understanding, and support.

Self-discipline: Embrace training for recognizing and avoiding implicit bias, guardian/protector versus warrior mindset, dealing with those with mental disabilities, and officer safety and wellness.

Innovation: Abraham Lincoln said, “You have the right to criticize, if you have the heart to help change what you criticize.” Challenge the status quo. What can we do to become better, safer, faster, and cheaper?

Neatness: Neatness counts. Ensure you are clean, pressed, shined. Neatness is a sign of order and discipline. Sloppiness symbolizes laziness and lack of pride in oneself and office.

Leadership: Good leaders take ownership of a situation. They truly care about the people and all circumstances. They sense of “oneness” and realize that individuals within the organization are all on the same team.

Moral Courage: Integrity is looking forward to the consequences of your choices. Abraham Lincoln said, “To stand in silence when you should be protesting, makes you a coward.” Do the right thing even if it is the hardest thing to do.

Courtesy / Customer Service: A person may forget the words you said, but they will never forget the manner in which you said them. Reinforce community policing with emphasis on protection, procedural justice, and dignity for all. Foster cooperation, community engagement, and positive non-enforcement activities.

