

THE SUN NEWS

Horry deputy chief retires amid misconduct probe

BY TERRI RICHARDSON
trichardson@thesunnews.com

In yet another allegation of police misconduct, a second Horry County Police deputy chief has stepped down following an internal affairs investigation.

This is the second deputy chief to either retire or resign in the past year after reports of alleged wrongdoing was discovered by officials.

Horry County Police Chief Kris Leonhardt in an emailed statement Tuesday said that Deputy Chief Lance Winburn had announced his retirement. The announcement came in the same email regarding an internal affairs investigation launched earlier this month.

It appears the investigation stems from the June 2022 arrest of Thomas Wade Long, the son-in-law of former Horry County Council member Harold Worley. Long was arrested on charges of misuse of 911.



JANET BLACKMON MORGAN jblackmon@thesunnews.com

A 2016 Sun News photo shows then-acting Horry County Police Chief Lance Winburn. Chief Deputy Winburn stepped down in April 2026 after an internal affairs investigation showed misconduct by him over a 2022 arrest.

Winburn's retirement came after the internal investigation was launched on April 9, according to a text Wednesday from Horry County Police spokesperson

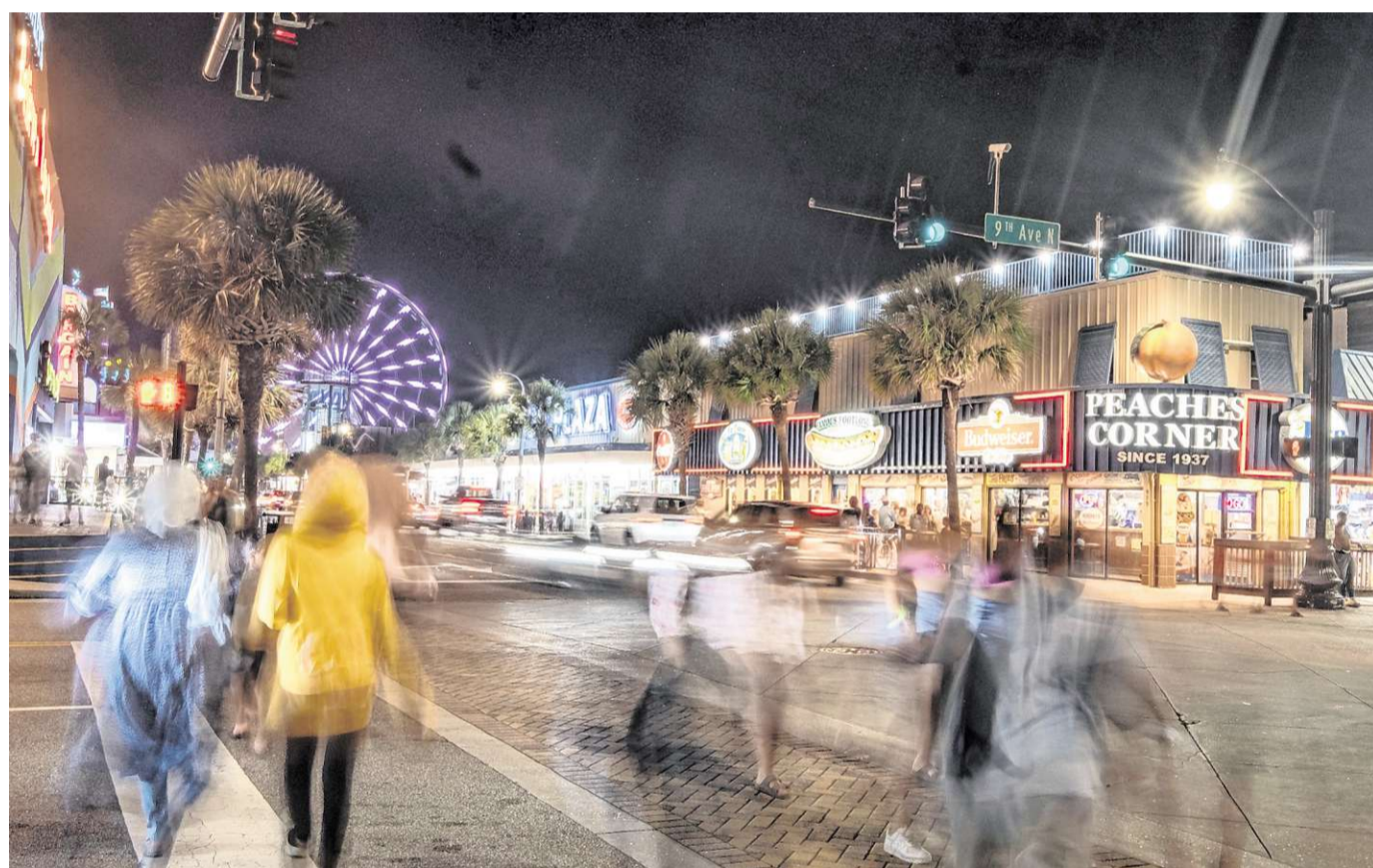
Thomas Bell.

The investigation began after a Freedom of Information Act request was submitted asking for documents related to a 2022 arrest incident, the statement said. There was an internal affairs investigation in 2022 regarding the incident under previous leadership, "so I was not immediately aware of it," Leonhardt said in the statement.

The new internal affairs investigation this month found that an HCPD policy violation occurred in relation to the 2022 incident, which led to Winburn's retirement, the statement said.

The internal affairs cover sheet provided to The Sun News on Wednesday said Winburn had violated the department's policies for ordering the arresting officer to return Long to Little River, the incident location, after he had already been handcuffed and was being taken to J. Reuben Long Detention Center. Winburn told the officer to issue him a citation instead.

SEE DEPUTY CHIEF, 6A



JASON LEE jlee@thesunnews.com

Tourists pass by Peaches Corner, one of Myrtle Beach's landmark restaurants on Ocean Boulevard. A shooting that happened inside the restaurant June 27, 2025, between an employee and another person left an 18-year-old dead.

Victim's family not told of shooting suspect's second release

BY TERRI RICHARDSON
trichardson@thesunnews.com

It was a summer night in June and just like many young people in the Myrtle Beach area, Grayson Meyers and his friend had planned to head down to Ocean Boulevard.

A hub of downtown Myrtle Beach, the boulevard is known for its shops, the boardwalk and the well-known SkyWheel. It draws thousands of people, both visitors and locals, and is only steps away from the Atlantic Ocean. But it's also known for crime, including a deadly mass shooting that left one person dead and 11 others injured only a month earlier in the same location. Meyers' mother, Crystal Sparkman,

tried to steer her youngest son away from Ocean Boulevard that June 27, 2025, night, telling him that the Boulevard is probably not where he needed to be.

"Mom, I'm fine," the 18-year-old Myrtle Beach teen told his mother. "I'll promise I'll be safe."

Two hours later, Sparkman received a phone call from a person "screaming that my son had been shot multiple times," she said.

Meyers had been gunned down by a teenager worker at the well-known restaurant Peaches Corner.

Evony McCray, 17, of Conway, admitted to police that he shot Meyers, who died at the scene, after a verbal altercation, police reports say.

McCray was charged with murder,

along with assault of a high and aggravated nature, unlawful possession of a gun and possession of a weapon during a violent crime. McCray is being tried as an adult.

He was given a bond that was "thousands of dollars less than my son's funeral," Sparkman said, and allowed to be on home detention.

It was a blow to the family, who had hoped the 17-year-old would remain behind bars.

Now, nearly a year later, Meyers' family is dealing with a new challenge in the case. McCray last month was released on home detention for a second time, although his previous bond had been revoked after he violated his

SEE TEEN, 4A

Mayor, council to review city manager's contract

BY MARIA ELENA SCOTT
mescott@thesunnews.com

Amid the search for a new Myrtle Beach police chief, some residents were surprised to find how involved the city manager Jonathan "Fox" Simons is in running the city.

Under a new mayor, critics see an opportunity to push for the longtime city manager's removal, and rumors are swirling on social media that Simons could be out when his contract is up for renewal this summer.

"I hope to have it renewed," Simons told The Sun News of his contract. "I've enjoyed my time with the city and think it's a wonderful place, and a wonderful community, and I enjoy working with city council."

At one of the community meetings arranged to seek residents' input on the police chief hiring process, an audience member questioned what would happen in the process if Simons was not still city manager. Ron Walsh, who is with Public Sector Search and Consulting firm and leading the national search for a chief, questioned why Simons would not remain in his position. The audience member replied that there had been rumors of Simons' removal.

Mayor Mark Kruea, who attended the same meeting, said that he didn't know what would happen regarding Simons' contract, adding that the council "hasn't had a conversation."

After Simons' contract rolled over last year without review, Kruea said that his contract would be evaluated. "It's a decision that we'll have to make," Kruea said.

WHAT IS A CITY MANAGER?

Myrtle Beach is one of more than 30 South Carolina municipalities operating with a council-manager form of government where the city manager acts as head of the administrative branch. Some of its neighbors, including North Myrtle Beach and Atlantic Beach, as well as notable cities

SEE COUNCIL, 4A

CCU student, board member's daughter use racial slur in video

BY MARIA ELENA SCOTT
mescott@thesunnews.com

A viral video showing people repeating a racial slur has been viewed more than 900,000 times.

According to a Facebook account that shared the video, one of the individuals who said the racial slur on camera is a

Coastal Carolina University student, and another is the daughter of a Pickens County school board member.

The Sun News reached out to the account for more information but did not receive an immediate response.

In the video, multiple people who don't appear to be Black repeat the racial slur while prompting another to join in. The Facebook account alleged

the people in the video, "decided to maliciously send this video to a biracial student" at Pickens High School.

"The intention behind the video was to hurt and harm the bi racial student as well as encourage others to inflict the same pain over and over again," the video caption says.

SEE STUDENT, 6A