



#### **CIVILITY PLEDGE**

*The way we govern ourselves is often as important as the positions we take. Our collective decisions will be better when differing views have had the opportunity to be fully vetted and considered. All people have the right to be treated with respect, courtesy and openness. We value all input. We commit to conduct ourselves at all times with civility and courtesy to each other.*

### **PERSONNEL BOARD**

## **Microsoft Teams meeting**

**Join:** <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/270410592752836?p=eyJvH7LtHnzGbjzqGp>

Meeting ID: 270 410 592 752 836

Passcode: jz9j6iB2

September 16, 2026 6:00 PM

### **AGENDA**

- 1. CALL TO ORDER:**
- 2. ROLL CALL:**
  - Elliott Gamble
  - Anthony Marrero
  - Ellen Surber-Simpson
- 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**
  - 3.I. Minutes from August 26, 2026, Meeting
  - 3.II. Minutes from September 2, 2026, Meeting
- 4. OLD BUSINESS:**
- 5. NEW BUSINESS:**
- 6. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**
  - 6.I. Executive session for consideration of hearing for Lamonta Thorne and Amy Sengsavath
- 7. SETTING OF NEXT MEETING, IF APPLICABLE:**
- 8. ADJOURN:**

**City of Hapeville**

**Personnel Board**

**Appeal Hearing**

**August 26, 2026**

Call to Order: Chairman Elliot Gamble called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

Roll Call: Elliot Gamble

Anthony Marrero

Ellen Surber-Simpson

All Board members present. Quorum is present.

Also In Attendance:

Stacie Johnston, Human Resources Director, City of Hapeville

Lajuana C Ransaw, Attorney at Law-Smith, Welch, Webb & White

Approval of Minutes-Minutes of July 30, 2026, meeting

Motion to approve by A Marrero with a second by E Surber-Simpson. Unanimous vote to approve minutes (no opposition or abstentions).

Old Business: None

New Business: Appeal Hearing of Lamonta Thorne Termination

In Attendance: Lamonta Thorne

Deputy Chief Justin McGinnis, Hapeville PD

Chief Bruce Hedley, Hapeville PD

L Thorne had made a request by email to review a video. The Board agreed to allow L Thorne to view such video and that was done using L Ransaw's computer.

Appeal hearing called to order.

Each party asked to identify themselves and/or the party they represent.

Roll call: Members of Hapeville PD and appellant L Thorne present.

Each party declared that they had no other witnesses to present at this hearing.

E Gamble read aloud the procedures for conducting this hearing which included but are not limited to: a time period of 30 minutes for each party to make a brief opening statement and present their case (witnesses and evidence) and a 15-minute rebuttal period for each party. The Board may ask either party a question on evidence or facts presented, a request for a time extension to present their case must be requested by the presenting party and approved by the Board, only matters stated in the notes of appeal and evidence presented in the appeal will be considered by the Board in making a decision on this matter and after each party has completed their presentation, the Board will take the appeal under advisement and will, after review of the evidence, render a written decision as soon as possible and this decision will be mailed to both parties.

E Gamble administered the oath to both parties.

Deputy Chief McGinnis began the hearing presenting videos concerning an incident on July 4, 2026, involving an assault (a knife stabbing) on one male person by another male person at the Chevron gas station-501 N Central Avenue.

Video evidence was obtained from the incident location and from body cameras of the plaintiff (officer L Thorne) plus from two additional officers (Officer Butler-Roberts who was off duty at the time-responding to this incident from an EJ or extra job) and Sgt Sengsavath.

According to the evidence presented, Hapeville PD filed a complaint against L Thorne for violation of HPD SOP CHAPTER 5.1.5 (A) (32) (35) Conduct.

Additional charges of violation of HPD SOP CHAPTER 13.2.4 (B) (1) (b) (d) (1, 2, 5, 6, 7) Collection of Evidence, the original charge of violation of SOP CHAPTER 5.1.5 (A) (32) (35) Conduct, violation of HPD CHAPTER 5.1.5 (A) (29) Untruthfulness and violation of HPD SOP CHAPTER 5.1.5 (A) (2) Insubordination were listed in the documents provided.

A motion was made to extend the time allotted to Hapeville PD presentation by E Surber-Simpson and seconded by A Marrero. Unanimous vote to approve the time extension (no opposition or abstention).

L Thorne was notified he was the subject of a complaint filed through this department and the complaint was assigned for investigation by Chief Hedley.

Deputy Chief McGinnis was assigned to the investigation and conducted an interview with L Thorne on July 9, 2026. Video of such interview was viewed by the Board. McGinnis read the procedures and policies of the interview and L Thorne indicated he understood and signed a form.

The investigation reached the conclusion that the allegations are supported by sufficient evidence.

L Thorne presentation:

L Thorne testified that he disagreed with the charges of conduct violations, collection of evidence violations, untruthfulness violations and insubordination violations. He said he conducted himself to the best of his abilities in the incident and he was not insubordinate to Sgt Sengsavath when he was shaking his head and appearing to give a negative response but he was responding to a dispatch notification. He did not remember Sgt Sengsavath speaking.

He said he did drive around the building looking for the suspect and then met Officer Butler-Roberts. He said he believed he was not the first officer on the scene but that Officer Butler-Roberts was the first on the scene even though Officer Butler-Roberts was not on duty but coming off an EJ (Extra Job) event.

He further stated that he disagreed with the violation of collecting evidence as Sgt Sengsavath should have done so.

He disagreed with violation of conduct charges in the fact he was not totally sure of the suspect's identity and did not want to falsely identify any suspect. He also felt he was not responsible for notifying the shift supervisor nor notifying a detective.

He felt that since he had only been on duty 1 to 1 and ½ years, he was due to have a teachable moment in relation to this incident.

Hapeville PD Rebuttal:

On rebuttal-Deputy Chief McGinnis presented written documents concerning departmental notification to L Thorne of a complaint against him and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of Hapeville PD and the Incident Report for 7/04/2026.

Documents provided attest that City of Hapeville, depending on the nature of the offense, reserves the right to skip any steps in disciplinary action at its discretion. These steps are: Coachable Moment, Warning, Reprimand, Suspension without Pay, Demotion, Termination or Other.

Questions from the Board concerning SOP, Officer Training and Internal Affairs investigation:

Currently Hapeville does not have separate personnel devoted to Internal Affairs investigations, so Deputy Chief McGinnis was tasked to conduct the investigation.

Typically, after graduation from the Police Academy, an officer undergoes training with a FTO (Field Training Officer) for a period of 10-12 weeks. After this training, if deemed capable, an officer is assigned to active duty.

SOP for training documentation-after completing training, an officer signs forms acknowledging receipt of SOP procedures and an understanding of such procedures. In the case of L Thorne, he did sign such documents.

An officer on EJ is not considered to be the first officer on the scene even though many times an off-duty officer may arrive to assist with incidents.

The actions of other officers was not relevant to the complaint against L Thorne and there was no factual error incurred in the investigation and termination.

The conclusion of Hapeville PD in the investigation is that allegations against L Thorne were supported by sufficient evidence and the decision was made to terminate the employment of L Thorne.

Therefore, Hapeville asks the Board to uphold the termination

L Thorne rebuttal:

L Thorne said even though EJ officers on paper are not considered to be the first on scene (the first responding officer), his expectations were that if they were present, they were helping and could be considered as first responders if they arrived as such. He contended that SOP does not specify on-duty or off-duty officers' responsibilities.

He was under the impression that Hapeville does not usually have incidents as severe as this one so he was not prepared for such an incident.

He felt that no command was given to him by Sgt Sengsavath, there was not positive ID of the suspect, he was not insubordinate and preliminary reporting nor collection of evidence was not his responsibility.

He did accept responsibility for not responding well to the incident.

He also felt that the disciplinary action taken against him was extreme and he felt that the incident was a coachable or training moment.

He stated he has a desire to continue to serve and would request that the Board overturn his termination or help ensure that his future employment opportunities would not be affected by this.

With no further evidence to present and no further testimony or rebuttal, motion to adjourn or close the appeal made by E Surber-Simpson with second by A Marrero. Unanimous vote to close the appeal (no opposition or abstentions).

Appeal Hearing closed at 7:58pm.

Executive Session: Not at this time.

Setting of Next Meeting: Board is set to hear another separate appeal on September 2, 2026. L Rawls said that a decision on any appeal should be in a timely manner (30 days can be appropriate). Motion to hold a meeting by Teams to make a decision on both appeals for September 16, 2026, by E Surber-Simpson and seconded by A Marrero. Motion passed unanimously (no opposition or abstentions).

With no further matters before the Board and no Executive Session needed, motion to adjourn by E Surber-Simpson-second by A Marrero. Unanimous vote to adjourn (no opposition or abstentions).

Meeting adjourned at 8:03pm.

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**Elliot Gamble, Chairman**

**City of Hapeville**  
**Personnel Board**  
**Appeal Hearing**  
**September 2, 2026**

Call to Order: Chairman Elliot Gamble called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Roll Call: Elliot Gamble

Anthony Marrero

Ellen Surber-Simpson

All Board members present. Quorum is present.

Also In Attendance:

Stacie Johnston, Human Resources Director, City of Hapeville

Lajuana C Ransaw, Attorney at Law-Smith, Welch, Webb & White

Consideration of the employment appeal of former employee Amy Sengsavath.

In Attendance: Amy Sengsavath

Jake Knanishu, attorney for Ms. Sengsavath -Radford Scott LLP

Deputy Chief Justin McGinnis, Hapeville PD

Chief Bruce Hedley, Hapeville PD

Appeal hearing call to order.

Each party asked to identify themselves and/or the party they represent.

Roll call: Members of Hapeville PD present. Appellant A Sengsavath and attorney present.

Each party declared that they had no other witnesses to present at this hearing.

E Gamble read aloud the procedures for conducting this hearing which included but are not limited to: a time period of 30 minutes for each party to make a brief opening statement

and present their case (witnesses and evidence) and a 15-minute rebuttal period for each party. The Board may ask either party a question on evidence or facts presented, a request for a time extension to present their case must be requested by the presenting party and approved by the Board, only matters stated in the notes of appeal and evidence presented in the appeal will be considered by the Board in making a decision on this matter and after each party has completed their presentation, the Board will take the appeal under advisement and will, after review of the evidence, render a written decision as soon as possible and this decision will be mailed to both parties.

E Gamble administered the oath to both parties.

Hapeville PD presentation:

Deputy Chief McGinnis began the hearing by giving background on a violent incident occurring on July 4, 2026. The victim, a resident of Hapeville, was sliced by a knife during a stabbing-he was wounded on his hand. The victim described the event and identified his attacker. A Sengsavath spoke with the store clerk who also identified the attacker. Probable cause for an arrest was established by two independent witnesses identifying the offender, two officers and a third witness corroborating the victim's versions of events. As of Monday night, July the 7th, 2026, no arrest warrants were active for the offender. The chief of police became aware of this issue and ordered McGinnis to conduct an internal investigation into the conduct of all officers involved in this incident. After completion of the evidence, it was determined that Sergeant Sengsavath violated the department's standard operating procedures and was separated from her employment in accordance with city policy and HPD requirements. There was no error in fact that justifies the reversal of A Sengsavath's termination.

McGinnis presented videos concerning the incident on July 4, 2026, involving an assault (a knife stabbing) on one male person by another male person at the Chevron gas station-501 N Central Avenue.

Videos from the gas station and from body camera of A Sengsavath were presented.

At the incident A Sengsavath requested a copy of the video from the gas station clerk but the clerk was unable to provide it. A Sengsavath gave a card to the clerk with a case number and asked that the manager be contacted so he could provide a copy of the video.

There was blood outside and inside the store (the victim did go inside the store).

At the time, video showed that A Sengsavath was not wearing gloves. A bloody wallet was found outside the store and was handled & then discarded by A Sengsavath.

A motion was made to extend the time allotted to Hapeville PD presentation by E Surber-Simpson and seconded by A Marrero. Unanimous vote to approve the time extension (no opposition or abstention).

Hapeville PD contends that this video shows at the time of the incident:

It was established that a crime had been committed.

The identity of the offender was established by the victim and witnesses.

There was sufficient evidence to get a warrant.

A Sengsavath stated she would be handling the call and getting an arrest warrant.

A motive for the crime was identified to the officers on the scene.

A Sengsavath made statements indicating that there was enough evidence to move forward with obtaining a warrant.

The crime scene was not protected.

The next piece of evidence is the incident report for case #26-P02438 completed by Sergeant Sengsavath and submitted into evidence. The report shows that A Sengsavath identified the offender as Bruce Collins, was familiar with the offender and knew he had been involved in previous incidents and was known to carry a knife.

Other documents: images of message communications between A Sengsavath and Detective Workman, the on-call investigator as well as text communication between A Sengsavath and the Chevron store manager, Rahul. These images were obtained from A Sengsavath during the internal investigation of this matter. These show that A Sengsavath waited nearly five hours to notify the on-call detective and that the burden to obtain the video footage of the incident was placed on the store manager, not on the investigating officer. In the messages, the store manager stated he would give access to the CCTV on 2 separate occasions.

A video interview with Detective Chase Gore was then viewed by the Board. Deputy Chief McGinnis conducted the interview on July 8, 2026. McGinnis read the procedures and policies of the interview. C Gore indicated he understood this and signed a form. C Gore stated he received a text from his partner (Detective Workman) in which he reported the stabbing incident. C Gore was not on duty and thought that he had no need for further action unless a call for help was made.

That Monday A Sengsavath called, saying she needed help getting the video footage from the gas station as she was at a EJ (Extra Job) at the time. C Gore said he would get the footage and asked did A Sengsavath need anything else-the response was no. At that time, he was made aware that a warrant was still not taken out. C Gore obtained the footage and loaded it on his phone. He then told A Sengsavath he would upload the security and digital files to the case. Once it was uploaded, he notified A Sengsavath that it was done. C Gore did not remember if he reviewed the report before or after getting the footage but he thought there was probable cause and A Sengsavath had given a well written report on the incident. A text between A Sengsavath and C Gore said that A Sengsavath was waiting for the video evidence before getting a warrant. At the time C Gore had questions about this but did not verbalize anything to A Sengsavath.

C Gore also texted A Sengsavath saying Lt. Barnes was asking if a warrant had been issued. C Gore attempted to convey urgency in getting a warrant.

On Tuesday C Gore obtained a warrant and started to drive to regular spots where the perpetrator was known to be. He found the perpetrator at the first location.

The interview with C Gore concluded.

This video shows Detective Gore was contacted by A Singsavath. On Monday, July 6th, around noon, she asked him to go by the Chevron store and grab the video footage from the store regarding the incident that occurred on July the 4th. C Gore states that he obtained and uploaded the video footage to the case into the records management system. C Gore stated that he informed Sergeant Singsavath that your video was in the files at 1:07 PM on Monday. The video showed that Detective Gore informed A Singsavath that administrative officers at the department were asking about the status of the warrants for the suspect around 6:00 PM.

Video of Interview with A Sengsavath: Interview conducted by Deputy Chief McGinnis.

McGinnis read the procedures and policies of the interview. A Sengsavath indicated she understood this and signed a form.

A Sengsavath then gave a report on the incident. There was a call to all units and A Sengsavath responded. She came on the scene and informed Officer Thorne (who was already present) that she would take over. A Sengsavath spoke with the victim. Officer Butler Roberts and Officer Odum went to look for the suspect. Officer Thorne remained on the scene.

After viewing body cam footage, A Sengsavath stated she did not remember speaking with Thorne and did not know of any reason for Thorne to shake his head negatively. She wanted Thorne on the scene for a teaching moment. A Sengsavath tried to get video footage from the gas station at the time but the manager was not available. She went back on Sunday and called the manager-left a voicemail with no response. The manager called on Monday-the video was ready.

A Sengsavath did not see a need to immediately call a detective and said it was a busy night with other calls so she would contact later. She was questioned about finding evidence at the scene: felt that there was other blood at the scene so no need to collect the wallet or a empty soda can with blood found at the scene.

A Sengsavath asked the reason for the interview and was told by McGinnis that there were violations of procedures in this incident.

This video shows that A Sengsavath both told the detectives that she did not need them to do anything initially & that she was handling the case. The video showed A Sengsavath stated that this is a clear cut case. The video showed that minimal effort was given on her part in trying to obtain the video from the gas station. At first, she stated she couldn't obtain the video because she was getting off work. Then the following day, she couldn't take the video from the store because she was heading to work for an off-duty job. Video shows that she and another officer encounter Bruce Collins again Sunday night. Her subordinate officer thought they were going to arrest him, but A Sengsavath stated they couldn't because she didn't have the video footage. The video showed A Sengsavath acknowledges that she could have collected pieces of evidence but failed to do so.

#### Documents:

City of Hapeville PD SOP

Employee Notification of Final Disposition

Incident Report/A Sengsavath

Images of text messages

A Sengsavath was notified of the charges:

Violation of HPD SOP CHAPTER 5.1.5 (A) (32) (35) Conduct

Violation of HPD SOP CHAPTER 17.1.3 (A) (6) (D) (7) (8) Investigative Function

## Violation of HPD SOP CHAPTER 13.2.4 (B) (1) (b) (d) (1,2,5,6,7) Evidence Collection and Preservation

On July the 15th, 2026, A Sengsavath participated in a pretermination hearing with Chief Bruce Headley. After reviewing the information from the incident and the Internal Affairs investigation, the charge violations were read to A Sengsavath by Chief Headley. Chief Hadley offered her a chance to explain her actions during the incident that occurred on July 4th, 2026. Her explanation of her actions did not convince Chief Hedley not to terminate her employment. Chief Headley terminated A Sengsavath's employment with the city of Hapeville and completed the employment notification.

Hapeville PD contends that A Sengsavath was familiar with the offender and knew he had been involved in over 150 previous incidents and was known to carry a knife, she had sufficient evidence to get a warrant but failed to do so in a timely manner, mishandled evidence (a bloody wallet was found outside the store and was handled & then discarded by A Sengsavath), A Sengsavath failed to notify a detective and did not follow SOP in handling of the crime scene (preserving evidence).

Question from E Gamble about contact with the offender on July 5<sup>th</sup>: McGinnis stated that A Sengsavath & Officer L Thorne encountered the offender again and Thorne thought they were going to arrest the suspect. Sengsavath overruled, stating that she did not have video footage or an arrest warrant.

Attorney Jake Knanishu representing A Sengsavath introduced himself. He is an associate at Radford Scott LLP in Decatur. E Gamble asked him to also state the factual error that his client alleges in the appeal. J Knanishu asked some allowance to hold off on identifying the factual error alleged as it was a critical part of the argument that would be made.

Presented documents A1, A2 and A3.

Documents:

Employee Notification of Final Disposition (Charges against A Sengsavath)

Images of cellphone text messages.

Performance Appraisal for A Sengsavath

He stated he is unfamiliar with procedures in this hearing-how he is supposed to rebut the allegation that Mr. Collins was engaged in another incident and was not arrested because of A Sengsavath's conduct. The issue is in his opinion not that complicated: to find out

whether the city has proven the factual basis for its stated reason for termination. Did she do or fail to whatever she is accused having done or failed to do? The police department has not yet said definitively what she did wrong. The only question for the Board is why was she fired? And did it happen? Was it waiting to get video footage? Was it not calling the on-call detective immediately and waiting several hours instead? Was it allowing Detective Gore to apply for the warrant instead of her after he offered to do so?

Contents that allegations to that effect but they are not in writing. Document exhibit A2 was just received for the first time 2 days ago-almost a month after A Sengsavath filed the appeal-after weeks of waiting on an open records request. J Knanishu contends they are basically hampered in the ability to prepare for the hearing.

Exhibit A3-a collection of text messages from A Sengsavath's phone. First 3 pages are screenshots with Detective Gore. The next 2 pages are screenshots of text message with Detective Workman. On the messages with C Gore, he never once told Sengsavath if she was doing anything wrong, never asked have you applied for a warrant, never said she needed to apply for a warrant immediately. On the third page C Gore offers to get the warrant and she allowed him to do so.

The next two pages are text message with Detective Workman and her phone call shortly thereafter. Knanishu contends that testimony given by employer says she wasn't acting urgently enough to secure these warrants. He notes in the document that as soon as she contacted the on-call Detective, she was going to pursue warrants, so maybe the problem was that she waited to get this video footage. Maybe that's why she was fired. We have to make assumptions at this point because we don't know exactly what the Police Department said is the reason she was fired. We don't know exactly what the police have said she did wrong.

Before any wrongdoing mentioned in the appeal, A Sengsavath's record indicates she was a good officer. The most recent performance review (or at least the most recent one produced in response to Open Records request)-she received satisfactory or above satisfactory grades in every single category. On the first page, her title is listed as Corporal because she had recently been promoted to Sergeant.

Board questions:

A Sengsavath was asked how many years she has been in service? Since 2017. Any prior service or experience? No.

Asked about other officers present-why not go look for the suspect? A Sengsavath stated she did request Officer Odum to go check certain hot spots. And she wanted Officer

Thorne to be with her as a teachable moment for him to learn. Officer Butler Roberts was on a part-time job, heard on the radio and decided to come and search for the suspect.

Do you have any prior disciplinary actions against you with the city of Hapeville? No.

There were two write-ups on record that were not related to this incident.

Also noted that in the original charges against Sengsavath (Exhibit A1), she was exonerated of the charge of making false statements.

Rebuttal by Deputy Chief McGinnis:

Presented an additional document-the Department call log for the early morning hours of July 5-the remaining hours of the shift. In response to A Sengsavath saying they were busy going from call to call to call, log shows 4 more calls which were handled-total time on these calls was approximately 30 minutes.

Document: Daily Activity Log

Board questions:

What are the disciplinary procedures? Coachable moment, warning, reprimand, suspension with or without pay and termination. It also states that the agency is under no obligation to start with the lowest and move to the highest. That it is based on the incidence or total number of incidents at the administration's discretion.

Are SOPs part of an annual review? Not necessarily. New hires are to study and know SOPs; any changes in policy or if a new policy is created, officers are notified of these changes or new policies at that time.

The conclusion of Hapeville PD in the investigation is that allegations against A Sengsavath were supported by sufficient evidence, and the decision was made to terminate the employment of A Sengsavath.

Therefore, Hapeville asks the Board to uphold the termination.

Rebuttal by Jake Khanishu, attorney for A Sengsavath

No further evidence to present. There is no dispute that A Sengsavath was a good officer. The question that cannot really be answered is exactly why she was fired. So we respectfully submit that the termination was illegitimate and ask the Board to reverse the termination.

With no further evidence to present and no further testimony or rebuttal, motion to adjourn or close the appeal made by E Surber-Simpson with second by A Marrero. Unanimous vote to close the appeal (no opposition or abstentions).

Appeal Hearing closed at 8:03pm.

Executive Session: Not at this time.

Setting of Next Meeting: September 16, 2026, at 6pm at a virtual (Teams) meeting for executive session to make a decision on two appeal hearings.

With no further matters before the Board and no Executive Session needed, motion to adjourn by E Surber-Simpson-second by A Marrero. Unanimous vote to adjourn (no opposition or abstentions).

Meeting adjourned at 8:06pm.

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**Elliot Gamble, Chairman**