

To: Town Manager Elaine Lazarus
Town of Hopkinton Select Board
From: Deputy Chief Scott van Raalten
RE: Police Department Response to Public Comments
Date: November 7, 2025

Dear Mrs. Lazarus and Select Board,

At the Nov. 4 Select Board meeting, several public comments included claims that the Police Department has intentionally withheld information related to Petros Sismanis. These comments contained inaccurate and misleading statements that have circulated for some time, which are addressed herein.

Massachusetts has a unique records restriction law referred to as The Domestic Violence Act of 2014. The Jan. 12, 2023, incident involving Mr. Sismanis was properly documented in the Hopkinton Police Department's internal log as required by the law, specifically [Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, Section 98F](#). The same law mandates that certain incidents — including those involving domestic violence, rape or sexual assault — be withheld from the publicly posted daily log. The law states that these “entries shall be kept in a separate log and shall not be a public record, nor shall such entries be disclosed to the public.” Plainly, this statute advances an important public policy of preserving the privacy of victims of certain events.

To be clear, the withholding of such records is not discretionary. In fact, a member of a Police Department who violates this law is subject to strict penalties, which may include imprisonment or fines. The Hopkinton Police Department had no choice but to remove the incident from the public log. As with all other police departments in the Commonwealth, we are banned from including such incidents in public logs for the statutory and public policy reasons discussed above. The law also prohibits the Department from releasing any records on these cases or even acknowledging that they exist prior to arraignment. After arraignment, trial court rules generally dictate that only the District Attorney's Office may comment on such a case.

At no time did the Hopkinton Police Department conceal or alter information, and absolutely no discretion was used in deciding whether or not to release these records in whole or under redaction.

Every crime reported to the Hopkinton Police Department is taken seriously from the start and thoroughly investigated, consistent with our policies and procedures. In this matter, following the investigation by our detectives, the case was referred to the

Middlesex District Attorney's Office for prosecution, which resulted in a conviction. Far from a cover-up, this was a lawful, effective investigation, and our investigators should be commended for the work they did in bringing this dangerous felon to justice.

It is clear that there are also misconceptions about the strict statutory limits on information that police may share about registered sex offenders. In an effort to clarify what the law does and does not allow with respect to such information, please note the following:

- **Level 1 offenders:** Information is confidential and cannot be disclosed to the public.
- **Level 2 offenders:** Information may be shared only upon request; police departments MAY NOT proactively publish information.
- **Level 3 offenders:** Departments MUST notify the community and actively distribute information.

While any member of the public has a right to know who the Level 2 and 3 Offenders are in the community, the usage of that information is governed by [MGL Chap 6 Sec 178N](#). Violating these laws can result in criminal penalties for the releasing agency or individual. These laws are designed to balance public awareness with constitutional privacy protections.

The Hopkinton Police Department was legally prohibited from proactively informing community members about Mr. Sismanis' sex offender status. This, once again, is a matter of state law. Police departments have zero discretion in these matters.

The Department also continues to hear concerns about our handling of a 2024 "swatting" incident. That case was reviewed by FBI Special Agent Brian LeBlanc, a national expert in hoax bomb threats and swatting investigations, at our request as part of an after-action review. Special Agent LeBlanc confirmed that our officers and dispatchers acted precisely in line with federal best practices. This matter was also reviewed at a Select Board meeting on Dec. 3, 2024. It is inaccurate that a resident claims their email to the Board received no response. The claims that the Select Board received no information on this matter are inaccurate.

The Hopkinton Police Department remains committed to transparency and continuous improvement with every citizen interaction and call for service. Because of the clear misconceptions among some residents regarding the requirements of the Domestic Violence Act of 2014 and Megan's Law/Sex Offender Registry Board, we are collaborating with town counsel to develop a disclaimer to help residents understand

what information can legally be shared in the police log and how to request additional records. This will appear on the Department's website, at the top of every police log and will also accompany future responses to records requests.

We deeply regret the false narrative that has emerged regarding the Hopkinton Police Department's actions, stemming from a small group of residents' misunderstanding of these complex issues. My review of the facts show that our officers and employees not only acted appropriately, but that our criminal investigation into Mr. Sismanis directly led to his conviction and his potential deportation from the United States. Certain materials and records simply cannot be released publicly or immediately, despite the desires of some — and despite our own desire for transparency in many cases. This is not a matter of preference but of compliance with Massachusetts State Law, of which we are duty bound.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Scott van Raalten", is written over a horizontal line.

Acting Chief Scott van Raalten