

**PINELLAS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DIVISION
INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM**

DATE: SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

TO: DISTRIBUTION

FROM: CAPTAIN ROBERT OSTERLAND RO
Professional Standards Division

SUBJECT: AI 26-012 SHERIFF'S FINDING

On September 21, 2026, at 0755 hours, Sergeant Walter Etheridge, #57664, was terminated per Sheriff Gualtieri as a result of AI 26-012.

DISTRIBUTION:

Sheriff Bob Gualtieri
Chief Deputy Dave Danzig
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**PINELLAS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF
INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM**

DATE: **SEPTEMBER 21, 2026**

TO: **SERGEANT WALTER ETHERIDGE, #57664**

FROM: **SHERIFF BOB GUALTIERI**

SUBJECT: **CHARGES RE: AI 26-012**

An investigation has been conducted by the Administrative Investigations Section, Professional Standards Division, of the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office. Following review by the Administrative Review Board and the Sheriff, you are charged with the following violations:

On, but not limited to, May 11, 2026, while on duty in Pinellas County, Florida, you violated the Pinellas County Sheriff's Civil Service Act, Laws of Florida, 89-404 as amended by Laws of Florida 08-285, Section 6, Subsection 4, by violating the provisions of law or the rules, regulations, and operating procedures of the Office of the Sheriff.

1. You violated Pinellas County Sheriff's Office General Order 3-1.1, Rule and Regulation 5.4, Duties and Responsibilities;
2. You violated Pinellas County Sheriff's Office General Order 3-1.1, Rule and Regulation 5.17(a), Insubordination;
3. You violated Pinellas County Sheriff's Office General Order 3-1.1, Rule and Regulation 5.6, Truthfulness;
4. You violated Pinellas County Sheriff's Office General Order 3-1.1, Rule and Regulation 5.5, Obedience to Laws and Ordinances.

Synopsis: An anonymous complaint alleged that you were derelict in your duties by spending an inordinate amount of time in a secluded office loafing and it questioned your overall job performance while you were assigned as a sergeant on North Division B-Nights at the Pinellas County Jail. The complainant alleged that you spent extended periods in the third-floor office, which the complaint described as your "sleeping quarters," and that you kept a blanket there. The subsequent investigation revealed supervisory, reporting, timekeeping, computer-use, and other misconduct described below. The specific incidents cited herein are representative examples and not an exhaustive list of all your misconduct documented in the AIS case file.

As a shift supervisor, you were responsible under SOP DET 01-02 for overseeing assigned housing areas, responding to incidents, checking inmates in segregation, and ensuring required documentation was accurate. As acting shift commander, you were the highest-ranking person on duty, and you had responsibility for the entire shift and for decisions requiring shift-commander

authority. These included considering and approving inmate placement in a Pro-Straint Safety Chair under SOP DET 03-17.

On February 23, 2026, without authorization and contrary to your responsibilities as the acting shift commander, you left the jail compound for an extended period of time and abandoned your shift. While you were away from the jail unrelated to your duties, staff needed authorization to place an inmate in a safety chair. Staff made repeated attempts to contact you but could not reach you at first because your telephone was in your vehicle while you were away without authorization. You eventually gave permission for the chair placement by telephone, without personally observing the inmate, and you returned to the jail after staff placed the inmate in the chair. However, your official report began, "I was notified and responded to 2H3," and you then described your order to place the inmate in the chair. Your statement was false and misleading as it did not disclose that you were off compound when you gave the order by telephone or that you responded to the location after returning to the jail. Those omissions and the stated sequence were false and misrepresented material facts about your response and the basis for the authorization.

Between March 1 and June 1, 2026, video documented 56 hours and 11 minutes that you were away from the jail compound during scheduled shifts, including 33 hours and 7 minutes while you were acting shift commander. After the investigator credited early-sergeant duties and allotted meal periods, 39 hours and 30 minutes remained as time you left the jail without authorization and abandoned your duties. You left the compound on 27 of 38 scheduled shifts reviewed between March 1 and May 15. For example, on March 28, you departed at approximately 1741 hours and did not return until approximately 0018 hours the next morning, over five hours after your scheduled shift started. On April 7–8, you abandoned your duties and were away from the jail for a combined 4 hours and 46 minutes during one shift; on May 5–6, you were away for a combined 4 hours and 54 minutes while acting shift commander. None of this time was authorized leave and you received pay while not working. The former shift commander acknowledged allowing some flex time in the middle of your shift for family needs while he was present and on duty. Any time that exceeded the flex time amount was to be taken as accrued leave. You were directed that you were not to leave the jail compound while serving as the acting shift commander, which you did.

Video also documented that you spent 158 hours and 44 minutes in the third-floor sergeant's office, including 71 hours and 20 minutes while you were acting shift commander. The former shift commander had directed you to use the downstairs lieutenant's office and keep its door open while you were the acting shift commander so staff would feel able to approach you. You nonetheless spent extended periods in the third-floor office with the door closed and lights off, frequently bringing a blanket there. Of the recorded office time, 79 hours and 41 minutes had no corresponding internet activity. On the April 12–13 shift, for example, you remained in the secluded office for approximately 6 hours and 30 minutes, with no recorded internet activity until approximately 5 hours and 42 minutes after you entered. Internet records do not account for every possible work activity, but the video and your own admissions establish that you did not personally conduct daily rounds or see each restrictive-housing inmate whose condition you were responsible for checking. The corporal assigned to your areas reported that you participated in no third-floor zone inspections and only about 30–40 percent of third-floor shakedowns.

You also served as the shift's Field Training Sergeant. SOP DET 14-06 assigned that position responsibility for managing the field-training program and ensuring completion of required training documentation. Although recruits were assigned to your shift during your tenure, you reported that you could not access WebSTER for months and you had the field-training corporal enter documentation and perform the end-of-week supervisory reviews. On October 20, 2025, the field-training corporal told the assistant field-training coordinator you lacked WebSTER credentials; the coordinator checked and confirmed you had been granted access. You still did not access the system, and you had the corporal do all the work, despite claiming that you met with recruits and ordinarily handled end-of-phase reviews yourself. You failed to fulfill your obligations as the shift's Field Training Sergeant.

The investigation determined that you falsified overtime submissions and that you were paid for work you did not perform. You submitted overtime claims that exceeded the time you were documented to have been working. On ten representative dates, you claimed a combined 13 hours and 2 minutes beyond the time supported by video or your own account. For example, on April 10, you left Honor Guard training at approximately 1100 hours, performed no further training work, but claimed overtime through approximately 1300 hours. The investigation identified other early departures beyond these ten dates. You also acknowledged approving your own false overtime submissions while acting as shift commander. The 13 hours and 2 minutes is the combined discrepancy in these examples, but it is not exhaustive of all the false overtime you submitted and for which you were paid.

Computer records from the third-floor sergeant's office identified 5 hours and 52 minutes of Facebook video activity by you across 17 duty shifts between March 1 and April 26, 2026. The recorded activity included 1 hour and 12 minutes on the March 13-14 shift and 1 hour and 5 minutes on the following shift. General Order 02-10 limits internet use during work hours to official business, and the Department of Detention and Corrections' internet-streaming directive prohibits access to video-sharing websites unrelated to assigned duties. You had received that directive. You continued to access unrelated videos while on duty.

During your subject interview and appearance before the Administrative Review Board, you acknowledged that you did not personally conduct daily rounds, you approved your own false overtime submissions and claimed overtime through 1300 hours on April 10 despite leaving Honor Guard training at approximately 1100 hours. At the Board, you acknowledged that your on-duty Facebook video activity violated the streaming directive and constituted insubordination. You also agreed that your February 23 report did not factually describe when you responded and contained a false statement.

The Administrative Review Board determined that your failure to perform and remain available for assigned supervisory duties violated General Order 3-1.1, Rule and Regulation 5.4, Duties and Responsibilities, and that your on-duty access to unrelated streaming videos contrary to the directive violated General Order 3-1.1, Rule and Regulation 5.17(a), Insubordination. After reviewing the investigation, the Sheriff determined that the material misrepresentation in your February 23 official account violated General Order 3-1.1, Rule and Regulation 5.6, Truthfulness, and that your overtime claims for periods you did not work were tantamount to theft of agency

funds and violated General Order 3-1.1, Rule and Regulation 5.5, Obedience to Laws and Ordinances.

Disciplinary Points and Recommended Discipline Range:

You were found to be in violation of four (4) Level Five Rule and Regulation violations totaling one hundred (100) points. These points, which were affected by no modified points from previous discipline, resulted in one hundred (100) progressive discipline points. At this point level, the recommended discipline range is from a one hundred twenty (120) hour Suspension to Termination.

Disciplinary action shall be consistent with progressive discipline, for cause, in accordance with the provisions of the Pinellas County Civil Service Act.



CAPTAIN ROBERT OSTERLAND
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DIVISION
FOR BOB GUALTIERI, SHERIFF

I have received a copy:

Date 9-21-26

Time 0752



SIGNATURE

BG:RHO:YT