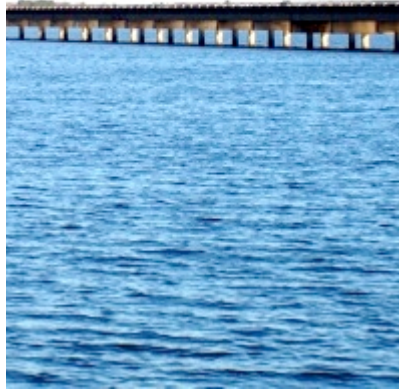




## Was Police Chief Fired for Tea Party Affiliation?

TexasFred, a conservative blogger, reports that West Tawakoni Mayor Pete Yoho has fired Officer Johnny Beckett from the city's police department and also suspended for ten days without pay Police Chief Jack Schultz, after which he will be terminated. The offense alleged is that the two officers belong to the Tawakoni Area Tea Party. West Tawakoni is a small town in eastern Texas with a population of about 1,500 people. In Hunt County, where West Tawakoni is located, Barack Obama received less than 30 percent of the vote in the 2008 general election, about the same percentage that John Kerry received in the 2004 general election, and a little less than the 32 percent of the vote which Al Gore received in the 2000 election.



Any termination of the police officers because of involvement in the Tea Party would not only violate the constitutional rights of the officers to associate with any legal organization they wished, but would also seem profoundly out of synch with the will of the citizens of West Tawakoni. The Texas Tea Party confirms the report of TexasFred and also notes that Chief Schultz had not only been on this small police force for 20 years, but that he also served as a volunteer fireman in the county. This story, if true, is evidence of an animus against the Tea Party which violates the rights of those officers.

However, it is important to note that the validation of this story is still incomplete. [Van Zandt newspapers](#), which cover West Tawakoni, reported on September 17 that the city council was considering measures to reduce the police force for reasons that were purely budgetary. As Larry Briscoe, the editor of the newspaper publishing group, reports: "The sticking point continued to be the number of police officers to retain after this month." The vote of Mayor Yoho did, indeed, tip the balance to reduce the police force from five officers to three, but this was to comply with state statutory requirements to have a balanced budget and also to set tax rates to fit the budget. That periodical, which simply reported the discussions in an open meeting before the reported termination of Chief Yoho and Officer Beckett, presents a somewhat different picture — that the city council members and the City Administrator, Cloy Richards, were discussing ways to trim the city budget and Richards was directed to come back with revised proposals.

Candy Schultz, the wife of Police Chief Schultz, is also one of the five city council members, and City Attorney Charles Calkins, during this open meeting, questioned whether Mrs. Schultz could appropriately vote on budgetary measures affecting the police budget, given the fact that her husband was Chief of Police. Mayor Yoho, during the meeting, also asked questions which seem like good questions for a cost-conscious mayor, like why police officers were sitting at Scottie's, a local café, three hours a day.



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on October 27, 2010

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Is this an ideological jihad against police officers who happen to belong to the Tea Party movement? Perhaps, but the record is far from clear at this point. Whether the story reported by TexasFred or that found in the Van Zandt newspapers comes closest to reality is impossible to determine from a distance. However, the principles involved are so critical, that this story bears watching.

What is clear is this: All Americans who believe in the principles enunciated by the Tea Party movement have a moral duty to defend those principles. But just like any other political, religious, or social movement, it is important to know the facts before acting.

What can we say about West Tawakoni's internal city government fracas right now? Just this: To be continued....

*Photo: Lake Tawakoni*



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