

ROBERT P. KOCHEN

Seeking a position with an organization where I can use my talents

727-992-6020

r.p.kochen@gmail.com

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Retired Chief of Police with over thirty-two years of proven experience as a certified Law Enforcement Officer within the State of Florida. Over twenty-one years of dedicated police administrative level experience, including seven-years of executive level experience serving as Chief Assistant to the City Manager of Tarpon Springs.

Core competencies include:

Emergency Management | Organizational Policy Formulation | Human Resource Management | Team Building and Leadership | Creative Thinking | Problem Solving | Government Budgeting | Government Purchasing | Organizational Structure | Collective Bargaining Negotiations | Crime Prevention | Community Policing | Criminal Investigations | Policy Compliance Investigations | Active Shooter Response Intervention

SKILLS

Adaptability	Emergency Management - FEMA
Communication Skills	IS-00700 National Incident Management System
Decision Making Skills	Emergency Management - ICS 402 -
Conflict Resolution	Incident Command for Executives
Complex Problem Solving	Emergency Management - G-400
	Advanced Incident Command System
	Emergency Management - G-300
	Intermediate Incident Command System
	Emergency Management - FEMA 3.2
	Integrated Emergency Management Course

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

❖ **Chief of Police, Tarpon Springs Police Department** Jul 2010 — Mar 2021
Tarpon Springs, Florida

Appointed Chief of Police by the City Manager and Tarpon Springs City Commission after a successful term as the interim Chief of Police to lead the Tarpon Springs Police Department, which is a full-service accredited law enforcement agency.

- Managed the daily operations of the department, which includes the patrol division, criminal investigations division, communications division, property and evidence division, crime prevention section, school resource officer division, public information officer division, and the code enforcement division.
- Served as Chief Assistant to the City Manager of the City of Tarpon Springs from 2014 to 2021.
- Successfully obtained the department's first accreditation status with the State of Florida.
- Composed and implemented operational policies, procedures, and guidelines for the department in line with Florida's accreditation standards.
- Composed and implemented policies, procedures, and guidelines for the department's emergency operations preparedness.
- Played an integral part in the City's Emergency Operations Center while activated as the Chief of Police and the City Manager's Chief Assistant.
- Effectively managed an annual budget of over 8 million dollars.
- Developed future leaders of the department.
- Served as a negotiator in the collective bargaining process.

- Served on the Pinellas County Police Standards Council, which was created by the Florida Legislature and tasked with improving the quality of law enforcement in Pinellas County.
- Served as staff liaison to the City's Budget Advisory Committee from May 2009 until March 2021.
- Served as the President of the Tampa Bay Area Chiefs of Police Association, which was founded in 1957 with the purpose of allowing local law enforcement executives a forum to exchange information and ideas, as well as coordinate resources and operations in the most effective manner possible.

❖ **Interim/Acting Chief of Police , Tarpon Springs Police Department** Jun 2008 — Jul 2010
Tarpon Springs, Florida

Successfully performed all of the duties of Chief of Police after appointment by the City Manager. Managed and lead the department on an interim basis until appointed as the permanent Chief of Police in July 2010.

- Began building a culture of team work within the department.
- Started the process of getting the department accredited through the State of Florida.

❖ **Police Captain, Tarpon Springs Police Department** Feb 1999 — Jun 2008
Tarpon Springs, Florida

Successfully managed and lead the **operations division** of the department for seven years.

- Duties included policy formulation and criminal investigations.
- Administered community policing programs.
- Executed advanced training programs.
- Implemented policies and advanced training for post 911 police operations.
- Played Integral part in the City's Emergency Operations center during hurricanes, major events, and major incidents.

Managed and lead the **administrative division** of the department and served as second in command of the police department for two years.

- Duties included budgeting and purchasing.
- Conducted professional compliance investigations.
- Served as the acting Chief of Police in the Chief's absence.
- Played Integral part in the City's Emergency Operations center during hurricanes, major events, and major incidents.

❖ **Police Sergeant, Tarpon Springs Police Department** Feb 1994 — Feb 1999
Tarpon Springs, Florida

Managed shift operations in the field with an emphasis on building strong teams to carry out the department's goals and objectives.

- Duties included daily training and pre-shift intelligence briefings.
- Conducted criminal investigations.
- Conducted civil investigations.
- Implemented community policing programs within the patrol shifts.
- Coordinated team efforts with the communications division and patrol units.

❖ **Police Officer, Tarpon Springs Police Department** Feb 1989 — Feb 1994
Tarpon Springs, Florida

After a rigorous civil service process of testing and evaluation, was hired as a certified Florida Law Enforcement Officer by the department. Position required good communication skills, good judgment, good moral character, good physical fitness, and strong problem-solving skills.

- Duties included daily shift operations.
- Conducted criminal and civil investigations.
- Conducted other duties as assigned by the shift commanders.

EDUCATION

❖ **Florida Metropolitan University** 1997
Master of Business Administration Tampa, Florida

Summa cum laude

❖ **Tampa College** 1994
Bachelors in Criminal Justice Tampa, Florida

Summa cum laude

❖ **Nassau Community College** 1986
Associates in Criminal Justice Garden City, New York

Cum laude

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION & TRAINING

❖ **University of Louisville** 1998
Louisville, Kentucky

Southern Police Institutes Prestigious 400-Hour Command Officers Development Course

Graduated with honors

❖ **Florida Department of Law Enforcement | State of Florida University System** 2012
Tallahassee, Florida

Florida Criminal Justice Executive Institutes | Chiefs Executive Seminar Class #46

Graduated with honors

❖ **Tampa Police Academy** 1988
Tampa, Florida

Certified as a Florida Law Enforcement Officer

AFFILIATIONS

❖ **Florida Police Chiefs Association - Life Time Member**
Tallahassee, Florida

❖ **Tampa Bay Area Chiefs of Police Association - Past President and Life Time Member**
Tampa, Florida

❖ **International Association of Chiefs of Police**
Alexandria, Virginia

SUN COAST POLICE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION, INC.

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14141 46th Street N #1205
Clearwater, Florida 33762

5 March 2021

VIA EMAIL AND U.S. MAIL

City of Tarpon Springs – City Hall
324 East Pine Street
Tarpon Springs, Florida 34689

Dear Mayor Alahouzos, Vice-Mayor Karr, Commissioner Tarapani, Commissioner Donovan, Commissioner Vatikiotis, and City Manager LeCouris:

On the occasion of his retirement from the Tarpon Springs Police Department, we could not permit Chief Robert Kochen to leave without telling you what he means to us.

We believe in Chief Kochen. We believe what he says because we've watched what he does. He is integrity embodied: straight forward; straight shooting; and hands on. He has treated us fairly and firmly, regardless of what we looked like or where we came from. He has been a father figure to many of us. We were all trained by him in one way or another.

Chief Kochen somehow managed politics while also transcending it. That is difficult in today's world where it is always easier to cave, to stay "on message," to buy another miracle fix all product, or to give in to the loudest antagonist. He didn't— and in that elegant resistance, he made all of us safer and better.

This Police Department, and Tarpon Springs as a whole, are immeasurably better because he was here. He retires with our deepest respect. We wanted you to know.

Our very best,

Jon Vazquez
President

Sasha Lohn, Esq.
General Counsel and Executive Director

Sgt. Chris Lemmon
Director

cc: Chief of Police, Robert Kochen

Jonathan Vazquez, President • Michael Ward, Senior Vice President
Markus Hughes, Executive Vice President • Adam Compton, Treasurer
Michael Blickensdorf, Secretary • Sasha Lohn, Esq., General Counsel & Executive Director
www.SunCoastPBA.com



OFFICE OF
MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS

City of Tarpon Springs, Florida

324 EAST PINE STREET
POST OFFICE BOX 5004
TARPON SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34688-5004
(727) 938-3711
FAX (727) 937-8199

March 11, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am the Mayor in Tarpon Springs and I had the privilege of working with Robert Kochen. I have been honored and proud to see him promoted over the years from Sergeant to Captain to our Chief of Police.

I have worked with him on many projects and budgets for the City and it was always a pleasure because he demonstrated professionalism, teamwork and leadership. He was well respected by other department heads and city employees and greatly assisted the City Manager over the years serving as Acting City Manager in his absence along with providing his expertise in budgeting and finance.

Under his leadership as Police Chief, our Police Department has become a well-respected agency and has received the Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation with high honors continually. He has done an excellent job in the day to day operations of the department, creating programs for the youth, homeless and seniors in our community. Our Police Officers constantly strive for excellence in policing. He has laid a foundation that will allow our Police Department to continue to succeed and advance in the future.

We will always be grateful for the outstanding service he has provided to our community and any organization would be fortunate to hire Robert Kochen, he is an excellent leader and overall great person.

Sincerely,

Chris Alahouzos
Mayor

CA/th



Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

Pinellas County Sheriff's Office

"Leading The Way For A Safer Pinellas"

January 13, 2021

Chief Robert Kochen
Tarpon Springs Police Department

Dear Chief Kochen:

Congratulations on the end of a long and successful career with the Tarpon Springs Police Department. Your care for the residents in your community and dedicated service of 30 years are appreciated.

With your hard work and assistance, the Tarpon Springs Police Department has risen to become one of the top law enforcement agencies in Florida.

Again, thank you for your service. Wherever the road may lead you, I wish you health and happiness as you embark on this new, exciting chapter in your life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Gualtieri", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Sheriff Bob Gualtieri
Pinellas County, Florida

BG/mhw



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March 2, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a City Commissioner in Tarpon Springs and I had the great privilege of working with Robert Kochen from March of 2019, to March of 2021. He served as our Police Chief, while also stepping in as Acting City Manager whenever our City Manager was absent or on vacation. I had the pleasure of working with him frequently on everything from administrative details, to major budget initiatives. His experience and accomplishments speak for themselves, but his character and leadership ability is what truly defines him.

He is a genuine professional in the way he works and communicates with others. It was always refreshing to work with him because he is authentic. He follows through on everything he says, which is a large part of why his officers and City employees respect him so much. He has mastered strategic decision-making and communication. Every time there was a new innovation that our Board or community pushed for, he was ten steps ahead. When our Board brought up the need for strategic planning in the City, Chief Kochen had already been creating and implementing a Police Department strategic plan for years. When most of the country was gripped by protests calling for more community policing, Chief Kochen had been developing and overseeing community policing programs for more than a decade. When many communities began considering body cameras, Chief Kochen had already taken the steps necessary to ensure they were budgeted for.

Under his leadership, our Police Department has become a model for others to follow. Any organization would be lucky to hire Robert Kochen, he is a great leader and his character is unmatched.

Best regards,

Connor Donovan
City Commissioner

Tarpon Springs' retired police chief reflects on long journey

Robert Kochen spent 12 years leading the Tarpon Springs Police Department through hard times, scandal and tragedy.



Recently retired Tarpon Springs police chief Robert Kochen, 54 poses for a photograph near the Spring Bayou. [CHRIS URSO | Times]

By **Jack Evans**

Published Mar. 20

Updated Mar. 20

ADVERTISEMENT

TARPON SPRINGS — Robert Kochen was taking heat.

It was December, and the police chief was telling the City Commission that his officers and other law enforcement agencies wouldn't be there to help if St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral's annual Epiphany celebration allowed its usual crowd of 20,000 to attend.

The fate of the small city's biggest event, just weeks away, had emotions running high. As Kochen stated his case, the crowd grumbled. One commissioner accused him of treating church officials like children. A church attorney said that if the chief wouldn't agree to a big crowd, "we don't need him."

In more than a decade as chief, Kochen had navigated turmoil — the Great Recession, misbehaving cops, the death of an officer and friend in the line of duty. He'd spent the year figuring out how to police in a pandemic that sickened a quarter of his officers. He was three months away from retirement, and he wasn't about to condone a potential super-spreader event.



Recently retired Tarpon Springs police chief Robert Kochen, 54. [CHRIS URSO | Times]

The sheriff backed Kochen. So did most of the City Commission. They kept working with church officials, and come Jan. 6 the Epiphany celebration went off smoothly. About 1,000 spectators watched as 55 boys dove for a cross in Spring Bayou. Afterward, there were no indicators that the event was a serious vector for the coronavirus.

To Kochen, who retired earlier this month after 32 years with the Tarpon Springs Police Department, it felt like a culmination of the way he tried to lead the agency for the past 12 years: firm but not hardheaded, with ears open to empirical information and the voices of his community.

“What you saw happen that day was pretty much everything we wanted,” he said. “Twelve years prior, I might not have had that wisdom.”

RELATED: [Tarpon Springs police chief retires and is replaced by familiar face](#)

New home, new cop

Born and raised on Long Island, Kochen landed in Florida in the late 1980s. He soon got the Clearwater Police Department to put him through the police academy. He stayed with the agency for a few months after graduating, then took a job in Tarpon Springs.

At the time, the future of the city’s police department was murky. In 1987, a Pinellas County grand jury investigated the agency and found it pinned under the thumb of local politicians. The grand jurors recommended disbanding it.

Instead, the city cleaned house and installed Chief Keith Bergstrom, who two years later hired Kochen.

The war on drugs was in full swing during Kochen’s first years as a cop. He and his colleagues were tasked with going after both drug dealers and drug users, he said, tactics that in hindsight he says appear antiquated.



Tarpon Springs police Chief Robert Kochen speaks at a 2015 memorial service for Officer Charles Kondek, who died in the line of duty the year before. [CHRIS URSO | Times (2015)]

In the 1990s, Kochen said the department tried what would now be called community policing, with a focus on making connections, not just arrests. As he became a sergeant, and then a captain in 1999, he was drawn to those kinds of ideas, from having cops play sports with kids to approaching problems like homelessness and drug use through the lens of social services.

“You really start to try to think in depth about things and think about things from a multi-angled approach,” he said. “Something like homelessness, I’ve said this so many times in front of the commission:

“You can’t arrest your way out of these problems.”

Hard times

Kochen became interim police chief in 2008, when previous chief Mark LeCouris became city manager, a job he still holds. Kochen again started a new role during an unstable period.

As the Great Recession raged, he feared having to lay people off. However, the city had enough financial reserves to keep the agency intact with a hiring freeze.



Tarpon Springs police Chief Robert Kochen speaks at a 2015 news conference announcing the arrest of Anton “Lee” Stragaj, 37, on a charge of first-degree murder in the death of Steven Schwartz, 74.

His first months as chief also included investigations into multiple officers accused of wrongdoing: One, the leader of the agency’s school resource officer program, was accused of having an inappropriate relationship with an 18-year-old high-school student; another slashed a homeless man’s bicycle tires. Both resigned.

“My goal was just to stop the bleeding” after the recession and the resignations, the chief said. “The department had moved beyond all the trouble it had in the late 80s, and it was really starting to come into its own professionally.”

‘We were meant to handle that’

In the late 1990s, when Kochen was still a sergeant, he met a new officer named Charles Kondek. The officer had just moved to the area from Long Island — the two men had gone to the same high school, a few years apart, though they hadn’t known each other.

Kondek was about to get married after a whirlwind romance, but he didn’t know many people in the area. He asked Kochen to be in his wedding party. Kochen agreed, and the two became good friends.



An undated photo of Tarpon Springs police Officer Charles Roger Kondek, Jr. with his son Andrew. [Photo courtesy of Kondek family]

On Dec. 21, 2014, Kondek responded to a call about a loud car stereo. He wound up facing a gunman who fatally shot him.

In the days after the shooting, the police chief visited Kondek's home. The officer's widow, Teresa Kondek, remembered Kochen promising that he and the department would take care of whatever the family needed: grocery shopping, getting her car fixed, buying Kondek's sons suits for their father's funeral.

"Not one time did I go to him for help and (hear) him say no," she said. "There's not anything I requested that he denied, ever. Not even today."



Tarpon Springs police Chief Robert Kochen comforts Teresa Kondek at the 2015 service to remember her husband, Officer Charles Kondek, who was killed in the line of duty the year before.

She said he, and the entire police force, became fixtures of the family's life. A slew of officers, including Kochen, taught her daughter how to drive. He showed up to the kids' graduations. He has cards sent to her house on birthdays, and flowers on the Kondeks' wedding anniversary.

"When something like this happens, all of them know this could be them at any time — I know he's thought of that," she said. "He's tough, and he looks like a tough guy in uniform, but he's still a man on the inside, and he still hurts like everyone else. And not a lot of people see that side of him."

To Kochen, going through that collective trauma affirmed that, over a quarter-century, the department had evolved from a political tool teetering on the edge of extinction to an institution he could be proud of.

"It was years in the making, years of hiring good people, promoting good people, instilling a good culture," he said. "As horrible as that was, we were meant to handle that."

'You set the benchmark'

After Kondek's death, the police department and the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office worked together closely. Deputies patrolled Tarpon Springs while the entire force attended the funeral. It also led to a closer relationship between Kochen and Pinellas Sheriff Bob Gualtieri.

“His contributions and presence exceeded just the boundaries of Tarpon Springs,” said Gualtieri, who noted that building relationships among Pinellas’ law enforcement agencies is one of the retired chief’s biggest legacies.

Kochen bid the city farewell at a City Commission meeting earlier this month. He got emotional, tripping over words. He promised he’d still pick up the phone when people called — but not after 5 p.m.



Recently retired Tarpon Springs police Chief Robert Kochen, 54 poses near the Spring Bayou. [CHRIS URSO | Times]

He retired as the second-longest-tenured chief in the department’s hundred year history, behind only his predecessor, now-city manager LeCouris

“He’s given us reason to keep our police department,” said former commissioner Peter Dalacos.

“You set the benchmark to which I believe I’ll be measured,” Maj. Jeff Young told Kochen as he was sworn in as the new chief.

For the past few months, he’s been doing some work assisting LeCouris, leading to a heated debate among commissioners about whether the pair were trying to further a police chief-to-city manager pipeline. Kochen said he’s not sure if he’d take that job.

He wouldn’t rule it out, though. He likes working with people, which is why he thinks he lasted so long as chief.

“I was a real person,” he said. “What you saw was what you got.”



Tarpon Springs police Chief Robert Kochen, right, speaks as Pinellas Sheriff Bob Gaultieri, left, looks on during a 2014 news conference following the death of Officer Charles Kondek. [CHRIS URSO | Tampa Bay Times]



In this 2018 photo, Tarpon Springs police Chief Robert Kochen plays with K-9 Charlie K while the dog's handler, Officer Tommy Nguyen, watches.