



SHERIFF

ADAMS COUNTY

SHERIFF GENE R. CLAPS

Tuesday 05/19/2026

Good morning,

Following this time memo is the executive summary investigation for IA2026-0004 regarding J. Bungartz.

START TIME	END TIME
07:25 AM	07:40 AM

TOTAL: 15 MIN

Thank you,

Ashley Portillo

Executive Assistant I

Professional Standards

Office: 303-655-3259 | Aportillo@adamssheriffco.gov



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April 2, 2026

To: IA File

From: Gene Claps

Subject: IA# 2026-0004

In review of IA case number 2026-0004, Division Chief John Bungartz was a subject of an alleged policy violation(s), which included 202.2.21 Use of Alcohol on Duty or in Uniform, 201.1.6 Professional Conduct, and 201.2.9 Conduct toward Employees.

The review found several days in question for the violations of 201.1.6 Professional Conduct, 201.2.9 Conduct toward Employees, and 201.1.6 Use of Alcohol on Duty or in Uniform. Based on interviews from the community meeting on February 5, 2026, at the public HOA meeting for Wright Farms at the Anythink Library. Undersheriff Carrier sat next to Chief Bungartz and noticed that Chief Bungartz was more animated than usual. According to Undersheriff Carrier, Chief Bungartz's eyes were bloodshot and watery, and his speech was noticeably slurred. However, Undersheriff Carrier was ill at the time, and he could not detect whether there was alcohol on Chief Bungartz's breath.

During the investigation Undersheriff Carrier stated Chief Bungartz addressed the crowd of about 10 people at the Wright Farms HOA meeting, where his speech remained noticeably slurred. Undersheriff Carrier quietly asked [REDACTED] if he smelled alcohol on Chief Bungartz. However, [REDACTED] only gave Undersheriff Carrier a concerned look and did not answer at that time. Then, after the meeting, Chief Bungartz approached Undersheriff Carrier in his vehicle and asked if he could look inside and then, separately, stated he thought he had lost his phone. Undersheriff Carrier stated Chief Bungartz's behavior was odd and unusual. Undersheriff Carrier stated Chief Bungartz repeatedly checked his pockets and later stated he would check for his

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phone at home. Chief Bungartz later texted Undersheriff Currier, stating he had found the phone at his residence.

Undersheriff Currier later contacted [REDACTED] who confirmed that he had smelled alcohol on Chief Bungartz's breath. [REDACTED] also shared that he believed this may be an ongoing issue and mentioned a prior incident in which Chief Bungartz appeared intoxicated during a predetermination hearing related to an officer-involved shooting investigation.

On February 6th, 2026, Chief Bungartz was directed to report to headquarters. During a meeting with myself, [REDACTED] and Undersheriff Currier. Chief Bungartz became defensive when presented with the administrative leave paperwork. Chief Bungartz denied the allegations and threw a throat lozenge on the table, stating, "There's my alcohol, I get these raspberry lozenges from Trader Joe's." Chief Bungartz then asked for the names of the witnesses. When I told Chief Bungartz that information would not be shared at that time, he accused Undersheriff Currier of being the source of the complaint. He declined offers for medical assistance and left the meeting angry, and stated, "fuck you" toward Undersheriff Currier.

Shortly after, [REDACTED] contacted Undersheriff Currier in a distressed state, reporting that Chief Bungartz had called him and demanded to know whether he had told anyone about smelling alcohol. [REDACTED] admitted he had denied making the statement because he felt pressured in the moment. He later reported that Chief Bungartz was also contacting [REDACTED]

Commander [REDACTED] was interviewed on February 11, 2026 concerning Chief Bungartz. Commander [REDACTED] directly supervised Chief Bungartz when he served as Undersheriff. He supervised him for approximately two years after Bungartz was promoted to Patrol Division Chief. Commander [REDACTED] described his working relationship with Bungartz as "very good." He explained they have known each other for many years and have maintained a strong professional relationship. Commander [REDACTED] was asked if he had any alcohol-related concerns about Chief Bungartz. Commander [REDACTED] stated he personally never observed Bungartz consuming alcohol while on duty or in uniform. However, he recalled one prior complaint. He believed it may have

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been around the time of a vigil for [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. Commander [REDACTED] stated he was informed, possibly by the Sheriff, that someone had reported smelling the odor of alcohol in Bungartz's breath at the function. [REDACTED] said he spoke directly with Bungartz about the allegation. Bungartz denied drinking, and because there was no proof or additional evidence, the matter was not formally documented or treated as a policy violation. [REDACTED] stated that no discipline or verbal counseling was issued. Commander [REDACTED] also recalled another complaint that occurred in May 2025, just before he went on leave. He stated he did not know the details and was not involved in how it was handled because he was placed on administrative leave at the time. He believed he learned of that complaint from HR [REDACTED]. When Commander [REDACTED] was asked if he had ever disciplined Chief Bungartz for unprofessional behavior at public events, [REDACTED] stated he had not. He mentioned there may have been a time he told Bungartz to "watch his language" during an Executive Leadership Team meeting, but nothing formal. Commander [REDACTED] stated he is very familiar with Chief Bungartz, both personally and professionally, and he was not aware of any medical or physical issues that could cause behavior that might be mistaken for intoxication.

During [REDACTED] interview on February 17, 2026, [REDACTED] stated Chief Bungartz left the substation that day around two or three o'clock in the afternoon. [REDACTED] stated he later received a telephone call from Chief Bungartz. He mentioned he went home to change into the French blue uniform so they could be dressed the same. During that conversation, Bungartz commented about having "drunk some beers" during that period. [REDACTED] told Bungartz he had about 45 minutes left before the meeting started. Bungartz stated, "I still have some time to drink another beer before the meeting." [REDACTED] said he was unsure whether Bungartz was joking, but the comment was made prior to an official community function.

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██████████ stated that upon Chief Bungartz's arrival at the meeting location, he detected a faint odor of fresh alcohol on Bungartz's breath while sitting across from him at a table. ██████████ described the odor as noticeable but not overwhelming. He stated the odor persisted throughout the meeting. ██████████ stated he did not observe slurred speech, loss of balance, or delayed responses. He described Bungartz as slightly more talkative than usual but otherwise functioning normally. ██████████ said the Undersheriff Currier quietly asked him during the meeting whether he smelled alcohol on Chief Bungartz. ██████████ stated he did not verbally respond at that time due to the presence of community members.

During the interview, ██████████ confirmed that Chief Bungartz was in uniform and actively addressed the public while representing the Sheriff's Office. ██████████ stated that if members of the public had detected alcohol on Chief Bungartz, it could have negatively affected public confidence and reflected poorly on the agency.

After Chief Bungartz was placed on administrative leave, ██████████ reported receiving a phone call from him. During that call, Bungartz asked whether ██████████ had told the Undersheriff that he smelled alcohol during the February 5th meeting. Chief Bungartz reportedly stated he had not received formal Internal Affairs paperwork and therefore believed he could speak with ██████████. ██████████ stated he did not directly answer Chief Bungartz's question and reiterated that his response to the Undersheriff had been limited.

On February 10th, 2026, at approximately 0950 hours, Chief Bungartz met in person with ██████████ at the substation. During that meeting, Chief Bungartz again questioned ██████████ about what he had reported regarding smelling alcohol. ██████████ was present during part of the conversation and intervened, advising Chief Bungartz not to continue discussing the investigation with ██████████.

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██████████ stated he believed Chief Bungartz was attempting to determine exactly what had been disclosed to the command staff. While no explicit threats were made, ██████████ acknowledged feeling concerned about potential retaliation and about how Bungartz might respond if it were confirmed that ██████████ had reported the odor. ██████████ characterized his concern as fear of possible retaliation rather than actual retaliatory action.

██████████ reported a previous incident on April 18, 2025, after ██████████ final predetermination hearing. During the hearing, ██████████ again detected a faint odor of alcohol on Chief Bungartz while Chief Bungartz was conducting an official determination meeting related to an officer-involved shooting. Chief Bungartz was acting in his official capacity at that time. ██████████ reported the odor was similar in strength to what he observed on February 5. ██████████ stated he reported that prior to the incident, he had reported to ██████████ who later advised him that the matter had been raised with HR ██████████

During the internal affairs investigation, ██████████, ██████████, ██████████ and ██████████ were all interviewed. Each reiterated consistent information of them not working closely with Chief Bungartz during the event, nor smelling the odor of alcoholic beverage from Chief Bungartz's breath, nor did they observe obvious signs of intoxication such as slurred speech, loss of balance, or other physical indicators. However, some noted that Chief Bungartz's behavior seemed different from what they were used to, with him being more talkative, friendly, and outgoing than usual. One describing Chief Bungartz as "looser" than he typically behaves, especially while in uniform.

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Additionally, Human Resource [REDACTED] and Undersheriff Currier were interviewed during this investigation. Finally, Chief Bungartz was interviewed on February 24, 2026, where he stated he did not leave early on February 5, 2026 and described his schedule as 0700–1500, Monday through Friday. He reported going home, eating dinner, changing into uniform, and driving a county vehicle to the HOA meeting at the Anything Library. He stated his role at the meeting was to represent the Patrol Division and that he was in full uniform.

When asked directly, Chief Bungartz denied consuming any alcohol at any time on February 5, 2026. He also denied telling [REDACTED] that he had been drinking beer earlier in the day and stated he does not recall making any such statement. Chief Bungartz described his demeanor at the meeting as “normal.” He denied having bloodshot eyes, slurred speech, or any signs of impairment. When advised that witnesses reported smelling a faint odor of fresh alcohol on his breath, he stated he could not explain that because he did not consume alcohol. He suggested the only possible explanation was cough drops or throat lozenges. He stated he routinely uses Halls menthol cough drops and Trader Joe’s throat lozenges due to throat irritation from prior radiation treatment. He produced lozenges during the interview and stated he carries them regularly. Chief Bungartz acknowledged that consuming alcohol while on duty or in uniform would violate agency policy. He denied doing so.

Chief Bungartz was asked about the April 18, 2025, final determination hearing involving [REDACTED]. Chief Bungartz stated he did not recall specific details of the day but denied consuming alcohol prior to that hearing. He stated no one ever spoke to him about any such allegation. Regarding the December vigil for [REDACTED], Chief Bungartz stated he does not recall attending the event and does not recall being confronted about any allegation of alcohol use at that time.

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Chief Bungartz admitted during the February 6, 2026 leave meeting, he made profanity-laced statements as he exited the room, including "this is fucking bullshit" and "fuck you" directed at the Undersheriff. He stated he was shocked and angry at the allegation and that his statement was directed at the accuser, not the Sheriff.

Chief Bungartz acknowledged that, as a Division Chief, is held to a higher moral standard. He stated he believed his actions on February 5, 2026, met agency standards and reiterated that he consumed no alcohol. He denied ever struggling with alcohol in a way that impacted his professional duties. When asked if he had any explanation for multiple consistent reports of alcohol odor across separate events, he stated he did not, beyond his use of cough drops and throat lozenges. Chief Bungartz concluded by stating he was hurt and angry by the allegation and maintains that he did not consume alcohol at any time relevant to this investigation.

I responded to Trader Joe's and spoke with two managers who had worked there for 6 and 8 years, respectively. I asked both managers if they sold raspberry throat lozenges. Both stated, No and explained they only carried Cranberry and Herb supplement drops and Honey Lemon drops, which are cough suppressants. I asked both managers if anyone had ever said their throat lozenges or cough drops caused people to smell like they had drunk alcohol. Both stated, "no". Based on Trader Joe's ingredients, descriptions, and own computer postings, their Cranberry and Herb supplement drops are designed as throat-soothing lozenges containing sugar, cranberry concentrate, menthol, and various herbs, and there is no indication that these drops contain alcohol or produce an alcohol-like odor when consumed. However, I did purchase both the Cranberry and Herb supplement drops and the Honey Lemon cough suppressant drops and asked 6 different people consume each type of drop. Out of the 12 total samples consumed, none produced any alcoholic odor on anyone's breath.

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The Adams County Sheriff's Office discipline process is based on the preponderance of the evidence, not the standard of criminal law, which requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

The position of Division Chief, the second-highest appointed position in a sheriff's office, below the elected Sheriff, requires a higher expectation of standards, conduct, and performance of duty. The executive command staff and leadership roles are scrutinized considerably more than any other position in the Sheriff's Office, and the expectations on the Division Chief are among the highest.

Therefore, allegation #1 201.2.21 Use of Alcohol on duty or in uniform, which states Sheriff's employees shall not consume intoxicating beverages while in uniform or on-duty – except in the performance of duty - subject to the approval of a supervisor. Nor shall Sheriff's employees appear for duty or be on duty while under the influence of intoxicants to any degree whatsoever or with an odor of intoxicants on their breath. I find **Sustained**.

Allegation #2 201.1.6 Professional Conduct, which states a Sheriff's employee is a conspicuous representative of government, and to the majority of the people, the employee is a symbol of stability and authority upon whom they can rely. An employee's conduct is closely scrutinized, and when actions are found to be excessive, unwarranted or unjustified, they are criticized far more severely than comparable conduct of persons in other walks of life. Since the conduct of an employee, on- or off-duty, may reflect directly upon the Sheriff and the County, employees must at all times conduct themselves in a manner that does not bring discredit to themselves, the Sheriff's Office, the Sheriff or the County. I find **Sustained**.

And finally, allegation #3 201.2.9 Conduct Toward Employees, which states Sheriff's employees shall treat supervisors, managers, employees, and working associates with courtesy and respect in their relationships with one another. Sheriff's employees shall not engage in hazing, intimidating, or other potentially harmful acts towards others. When in a public setting, in the presence of the public, sworn personnel shall be referred to by rank. I find **Not Sustained**.

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Therefore, based on these findings, the preponderance of the evidence in this internal affairs case, and all evidence provided, my recommendation is to terminate Division Chief John Bungartz effective immediately.

Gene R. Claps, Adams County Sheriff

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