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March 20, 2015

Chief Steven Reynolds
North Smithfield Police Department
575 Smithfield Road
North Smithfield, RI 02896

Dear Chief Reynolds:

We have received a complaint from Jason Richer, a resident of your town at [REDACTED] who has had enormous difficulty recovering from your Department some firearms that were seized from him for safekeeping seven years ago. We have agreed to assist him in his effort, and in that regard, I am writing to request that your Department make arrangements to return his weapons within the next two weeks.

The background of his situation is simple enough, though his effort to recover his property has not been. As a result of a domestic disturbance back in 2008, Mr. Richer was taken to the hospital for evaluation, and his lawfully owned firearms were taken from his home for safekeeping. No charges were filed against Mr. Richer, and he was released from the hospital the same day. Within a few months of the incident, he began requesting the return of his firearms from the Police Department. Despite his documented efforts then, as well as a year later, again in 2013, and then earlier this year, his property remains in the custody of your police department. There is no excuse for such an inordinate delay.

In 2013, the reason given for not returning his weapons was that the Department needed to authenticate some documents he had submitted, and in October of that year, Captain Lafferty advised Mr. Richer that he hoped to have a release “by the beginning of next week.” That week turned into months, and when Mr. Richer reinitiated the conversation earlier this year, the Captain told him on January 21 that he was meeting with the Town Solicitor “this week” and would get back to him. Yet two months later, Mr. Richer remains without his property.

The Department’s inaction and failure to return his property is a clear violation of his constitutional rights. We therefore request that you make arrangements to return the seized items by Friday, April 3.

Of course, if you feel we have misconstrued any of the facts, I welcome being corrected. Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Steven Brown
Executive Director

cc: David Igliazzi, Town Solicitor
Jason Richer