

Boyne City Police Chief Kevin Spate to retire after 27 years with department

By Annie Doyle Grove,
annie@boynecitizen.com

Reprinted from the Aug. 7, 2026 Boyne Citizen

After nearly three decades with the Boyne City Police Department, Chief Kevin Spate has announced he will retire at the end of September, saying he is leaving with confidence that the department is well-prepared for its next chapter.

Spate's final day as police chief will be Sept. 30, ending a 27-year career with the department, the past six and a half years as chief.



"It's time," Spate said. "After 27 years working for Boyne City, I'm at the point where financially it makes sense for me and my family to start doing something else."

He said the decision was made easier by the department's current position.

"We have a great staff. We have a great succession plan. We have fantastic community support. We have a commission that's supportive, a city manager that's supportive, and I can't see a better time for my family or for the department to make this move."

Preparing future leaders has been one of Spate's priorities during his tenure as chief.

He credits former Police Chief Jeff Gaither with mentoring him by sending him to leadership training while he served as assistant chief. Spate has continued that philosophy, encouraging supervisors and officers to attend leadership courses as they advance through the ranks.

Assistant Chief Dan Mercer has completed multiple supervisory training programs, including Michigan State University's Staff and Command School for police leaders. While the hiring decision will be made by City Manager Sam Demel and must be ratified by the Boyne City Commission, Spate said he hopes Mercer will become the

department's next chief.

"My hopes are that Assistant Chief Mercer will take over as chief," he said. "We'll have officers move up from there into the other supervisory positions, and the public won't see a change in the police department. Everything stays the same. You just have a different chief."

Spate said he intentionally waited to retire until the department was on solid footing.

"I became chief, and shortly thereafter COVID happened," he said. "I watched all these administrators who couldn't retire bail during COVID because it was nasty."

He said he never wanted to leave during a period of uncertainty.

"What I do not want to do is leave when things are bad. I don't want to leave when there's turmoil. I don't want to leave when there's uncertainty. Right now we're sitting in a spot where everything is going so well."

After spending more than a decade in police administration, Spate said he isn't interested in another leadership role.

"I don't really want to supervise anybody right now. I just want to do my thing," he said.

Instead, he plans to work part time for the Charlevoix County Sheriff's Office while continuing with the Boyne Mountain Ski Patrol.

"I've got a couple part-time jobs lined up to take my time up, and I'm just going to see what's out there and see how that goes."

Looking back on his career, Spate said his proudest accomplishment isn't tied to a single case or arrest, but to helping build the department into what it is today.

"Being a part of building the department as it is today, between the current staffing and benefits for the guys," he said when asked what he is most proud of.

Spate said he believes those investments have positioned the department for continued success long after his retirement.

"Everything right now is set up for success for everybody involved — for the city, for the community, for me and my family, and for the officers," he said. "It's the right time."