



CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

DEPARTMENT OF CITY CIVIL SERVICE
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CITY CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
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AMY TREPAGNIER
DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL

Thursday, May 21, 2026

Mr. Christopher Wolff

Re: **Christopher Wolff VS.
Information Technology and
Docket Number: 9812**

Dear Mr. Wolff:

Attached is the decision of the City Civil Service Commission in the above-referenced appeal.

This is to notify you that, in accordance with the rules of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Circuit, State of Louisiana, the decision for the above captioned matter is this date - 5/21/2026 - filed in the Office of the Civil Service Commission at 1340 Poydras St. Suite 900, Amoco Building, New Orleans, Louisiana.

If you choose to appeal this decision, such appeal shall be taken in accordance with Article 2121 et. seq. of the Louisiana Code of Civil Procedure.

For the Commission,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Stacie Joseph".

Stacie Joseph
Management Services Division

cc: Jonathan Wisbey
William R. H. Goforth
Jay Ginsberg
file

**CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
CITY OF NEW ORLEANS**

**CHRISTOPHER WOLFF,
Appellant**

Docket No. 9812

v.

**DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION,
Appointing Authority**

DECISION

Christopher Wolff appeals a one-day suspension communicated by letter on November 17, 2025, from the Department of Information Technology and Innovation (ITI). (Ex. HE-1). Permanent classified employees may appeal discipline pursuant to Article X, Section 8 of the Louisiana Constitution and Civil Service Rule II, Section 4.1. At all relevant times, Appellant was a permanent employee working as an Information Technology Specialist III. (Tr. at 73).

A Hearing Examiner, appointed by the Commission, presided over a hearing on January 27, 2026. At this hearing, both parties had an opportunity to call witnesses and present evidence.

The undersigned Commissioners have reviewed and analyzed the entire record in this matter, including the transcript from the hearing, all exhibits submitted at the hearing, the Hearing Examiner's report dated March 20, 2026, and controlling Louisiana law.

For the reasons set forth below, Mr. Wolff's appeal is DENIED.

I. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

ITI implemented a "change freeze" from October 15, 2025, until November 6, 2025, during City Council budget hearings in order to ensure the computer system was stable and to minimize interruptions to operations. (Tr. at 9-10; Ex. AA-1). The ITI Change Advisory Board approved changes in advance of the change freeze. (Tr. at 75; Ex. AA-4). In addition, if a change were

necessary during the change freeze, then the Change Advisory Board would use an approval process for an emergency change. (Tr. at 14).

Kimberly LaGrue, Chief Information Officer during all relevant times, testified that ITI trained Mr. Wolff about the Change Advisory Board. (Tr. at 52-53). Mr. Wolff testified he was aware of the change freeze in October. (Tr. at 74).

ITI needed to update root certificates during the change freeze. (Tr. at 19). The Change Advisory Board approved changes from Friday, October 17, 2025, to Sunday, October 19, 2025, to update the certificates. (Tr. at 20, 55-56). Despite working the entire weekend, Mr. Wolff was unable to complete the update of the certificates. (Tr. at 23, 79). Mr. Wolff continued updating the certificates on Monday, October 20, 2025, and Tuesday, October 21, 2025. (Tr. at 23, 83-84). Minutes after Mr. Wolff updated a certificate on Tuesday, October 21, 2025, the network went down. (Tr. at 25; Ex. AA-2). Mr. Wolff testified that the outage occurred about 30 minutes after he uploaded a certificate. (Tr. at 95).

No employees had access to the WiFi network some time between 8:30 and 10:30 Tuesday morning until about 3:00 Tuesday afternoon during budget hearings. (Tr. at 25, 35, 60; Ex. AA-3). Ms. LaGrue testified that “anyone who was not sitting at a desk was offline.” (Tr. at 60).

Dennis Gakunga, the Deputy Chief Information Officer, testified that Mr. Wolff should have requested emergency approval to update the certificates after he was unable to complete the update over the weekend. (Tr. at 23). Ms. LaGrue testified that Mr. Wolff could have requested an emergency change from the Change Advisory Board Manager. (Tr. at 59). Because Mr. Wolff did not request approval for an emergency change, the change was unauthorized. (Tr. at 64; Ex. AA-3).

Kerry Schrantz, a contractor for ITI, conducted an investigation and determined that Mr. Wolff's change on October 21, 2025, caused the outage. (Ex. AA-2). Mr. Schrantz informed Mr. Gakunga that "[t]he import of the new root certificates should not have impacted the configuration but it did." (Ex. AA-2).

Mr. Wolff testified that his update of root certificates did not cause the outage. (Tr. at 75). Mr. Wolff also testified that this update was routine maintenance and not a change, in contradiction of Ms. LaGrue's testimony. (Tr. at 67, 75).

II. ANALYSIS

A. Legal Standard for Commission's Review of Discipline

1. The Appointing Authority must show cause for discipline

"Employees with the permanent status in the classified service may be disciplined only for cause expressed in writing. La. Const., Art. X, Sec. 8(A)." *Whitaker v. New Orleans Police Dep't*, 2003-0512 (La. App. 4 Cir. 9/17/03), 863 So. 2d 572, 574 (quoting *Stevens v. Dep't of Police*, 2000-1682 (La. App. 4 Cir. 5/9/01)). The Appointing Authority has the burden of proof of showing cause: "On appeal, the appointing authority 'must prove by a preponderance of the evidence good or lawful cause for taking disciplinary action.'" *Jackson v. Sewerage & Water Bd. of New Orleans*, 2024-0801 (La. App. 4 Cir. 4/25/25), 414 So. 3d 984, 988–89; *Whitaker*, 863 So. 2d at 574. "It is well-settled that, in an appeal before the Commission pursuant to Article X, § 8(A) of the Louisiana Constitution, the appointing authority has the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence: 1) the occurrence of the complained of activity, and 2) that the conduct complained of impaired the efficiency of the public service in which the appointing authority is engaged. *Gast v. Dep't of Police*, 2013-0781 (La. App. 4 Cir. 3/13/14), 137 So. 3d 731, 733 (quoting *Cure v. Dep't of Police*, 2007-0166 (La. App. 4 Cir. 8/1/07), 964 So. 2d 1093, 1094).

“Simplified, before the Commission, the appointing authority has the burden of proving a trio of elements—(1) the occurrence of the complained-of conduct—misconduct; (2) the impairment, as a result of the misconduct, of the department's efficiency; and (3) the imposition of discipline commensurate with the misconduct—punishment.” *Do v. Dep't of Safety & Permits*, 2025-0062 (La. App. 4 Cir. 7/14/25), 424 So. 3d 103, 109, *writ denied*, 2025-01098 (La. 11/12/25), 420 So. 3d 714.

a. The Appointing Authority must show the impairment of the efficiency of the public service

“Legal cause exists whenever an employee’s conduct impairs the efficiency of the public service in which the employee is engaged.” *Whitaker*, 863 So. 2d at 574. “The Appointing Authority has the burden of proving the impairment.” *Id.* (citing La. Const., art. X, § 8(A)). “Disciplinary action against a civil service employee will be deemed arbitrary and capricious unless there is a real and substantial relationship between the improper conduct and the “efficient operation” of the public service.” *Id.*

2. The Appointing Authority must show the discipline was commensurate with the infraction

The Commission has a duty to decide independently from the facts presented in the record whether the appointing authority carried its legally imposed burden of proving by a preponderance of evidence that it had good or lawful cause for disciplining the classified employee and, if so, whether such discipline was commensurate with the dereliction. *Do*, 424 So. 3d at 109; *Durning v. New Orleans Police Dep't*, 2019-0987 (La. App. 4 Cir. 3/25/20), 294 So. 3d 536, 538, *writ denied*, 2020-00697 (La. 9/29/20), 301 So. 3d 1195; *Abbott v. New Orleans Police Dep't*, 2014-0993 (La. App. 4 Cir. 2/11/15); 165 So.3d 191, 197; *Walters v. Dept. of Police of the City of New Orleans*, 454 So. 2d 106 (La. 1984). The Appointing Authority has the burden of showing that the

discipline was reasonable and not arbitrary or capricious. *Neely v. Dep't of Fire*, 2021-0454 (La. App. 4 Cir. 12/1/21), 332 So. 3d 194, 207 (“[NOFD] did not demonstrate . . . that termination was reasonable discipline”); *Durning*, 294 So. 3d at 540 (“the termination . . . deemed to be arbitrary and capricious”).

a. Factors considered by Commission

“In determining whether discipline is commensurate with the infraction, the Civil Service Commission considers the nature of the offense as well as the employee’s work record and previous disciplinary record.” *Matusoff v. Dep't of Fire*, 2019-0932 (La. App. 4 Cir. 5/20/20), 2020 Westlaw 2562940, *writ denied*, 2020-00955 (La. 10/20/20), 303 So. 3d 313. The Commission considers the nature of the offense, the employee’s work ethic, prior disciplinary records, job evaluations, and any grievances filed by the employee.” *Honore v. Dep't of Pub. Works*, 14-0986, pp. 8-9 (La. App. 4 Cir. 10/29/15), 178 So. 3d 1120, 1131, *writ denied*, 2015-2161 (La. 1/25/16), 185 So. 3d 749.

B. ITI has Shown Cause for the Discipline of Mr. Wolff

ITI has shown that Mr. Wolff made an unauthorized change during the change freeze. Mr. Wolff admitted that he was aware of the change freeze and that the Change Advisory Board approved his update of certificates from October 17-19, 2025, during the change freeze. The Change Advisory Board’s approval of the certificate update over the weekend before budget hearings supports ITI’s position that updating certificates is a change.


Mr. Wolff’s unauthorized change impaired the efficient operation of ITI by disrupting the WiFi network during City Council budget hearings.

a. The one-day suspension is commensurate with the violation


Mr. Wolff updated certificates during a change freeze, even though he knew or should have known that emergency approval was required. Mr. Wolff's failure to follow ITI procedure, a neglect of duty, resulted in a network outage.

Mr. Wolff's appeal is DENIED.

WRITER:


Andrew Monteverde (May 19, 2026 14:39:37 CDT)
ANDREW MONTEVERDE, COMMISSIONER

CONCUR:


Brittney Richardson (May 21, 2026 16:16:04 CDT)
BRITTNEY RICHARDSON, CHAIRPERSON

Mark Surprenant, Commissioner
Mark Surprenant, Commissioner (May 19, 2026 17:37:27 CDT)
MARK SURPRENANT, COMMISSIONER