



Lake City Fire Department

225 NW Main Blvd., Suite 101, Lake City, FL 32055

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Randell Burnham
Fire Chief

TO: Stephen Witt, Mayor City of Lake City

CC: HR Department

FROM: Randell Burnham, Fire Chief

DATE: July 2, 2021

SUBJECT: Complaint

On June 15, 2021, City Manager Joe Helfenberger called a staff meeting to be held at 9:00 AM in the Council's Chamber. During this meeting Audrey Sikes addressed her displeasure with not being included in conversations and emails that directly affected her office. Audrey Sikes made it clear to everyone that it was just an unacceptable practice and should never happen. The conversations and emails she was referring to is at the root of the reason the IT Director, Adam Boatright stepped down as the Director and was also a contributing factor to Ami Fields termination.

On June 24, 2021, Interim City Manager Ami Fields called a staff meeting to be held at 2:00 PM in the Council's Chamber. Audrey Sikes was not present; however, the Deputy Clerk was present on her behalf. Ami Fields addressed all staff and stated her number one concern was our concerns. Several directors brought forward their concerns and issues. I asked if we could look into a more user-friendly public record request platform other than the current one being used by the Clerk's office. Ami replied "absolutely". The very next day, June 25, 2021 at 11:22 AM, I received a call from Audrey blasting me for making such a request; she was obviously angry; I had no idea I had touched on such a sensitive issue. Audrey stated several times that all I did was pour fuel on the fire. Though I had no reason to, I apologized several times. This went on for 51 minutes and I have witnesses to this conversation as she was on

speaker phone. With that being said I believe what happens next was an act of retaliation.

On June 29, 2021 Audrey Sikes herself went against the very practice she so adamantly despised, composing an email with the subject "Fire Department Items for Agenda". This email was sent out to the City Attorney, his staff, Amy Fields, Karen Nelmes and Joyce Bruner. I, the Fire Chief, was not included, even though the subject clearly states "Fire Department Items for Agenda". Furthermore, my name (Randy) was referred to twice within the body of this particular email, yet I was not included. Thanks to the City Attorney's professional courtesy extending an olive branch and copying me on the thread I was able to have an opportunity for input. I feel strongly that I was deliberately left off this email because Audrey knew that I would dispute the content; I never requested items to be an emergency walk-on. We all know it is never a good idea to walk items on the agenda before Council, the Mayor and citizens have ample time to review them, especially something as sensitive as a \$1.7 million fire station. However, Audrey knowing that Ami wasn't familiar with the process thought that Ami would just approve such a request which in turn would have made Ami and myself look very bad in the eyes of the Mayor and Council as well as the public. I feel very strongly this was done deliberately to create animosity between Ami and myself. I also feel it is a direct form of retaliation because I asked Ami if we, the City, could look at other public record request platforms.

This type of undermining and deceitful behavior from a top official of the City of Lake City is absolutely unacceptable. It is very toxic and creates a hostile work environment.

I have attached email conversations as referenced above.

Burnham, Randell

From: Fred Koberlein <Fred@klolaw.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 30, 2021 7:40 AM
To: Ami Mitchell Fields
Cc: Sikes, Audrey; Alysha Jenkins; Bruner, Joyce; Nelmes, Karen; Burnham, Randell; Alysha Jenkins; Monica Ray
Subject: Re: Fire Department Items for Agenda

Ami,

We noticed the multiple emails sent Friday afternoon on this Monday. However, my office has been working on the other agenda items and the large contract documents re: I75 & SR 47 that were provided Thursday evening. We did not notice there was an emailed request in the multiple emails to add these items on the agenda that was previously closed.

We anticipate finishing the above add-on item from Thursday, today. If my office immediately turned its attention to the Passero items, stopping everything else, it would take approximately 1-2 days to review the standard forms with Florida laws, make them ADA compliant, and approve the documentation if no revisions were necessary.

Ami, please advise whether you desire to amend the agenda later this week to include the late item, or add this item to the the second meeting of July. Note, there is hardly ever a good reason to walk-on an item rather than amend the agenda and provide more time for the public to review the materials and decide whether they wish to participate in the councils consideration of the item.

We will await the decision.

Thank you,

Fred Koberlein, Jr.
Board Certified Attorney - City, County & Local Government



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[386.516.2626](tel:386.516.2626) Live Oak, FL

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On Jun 30, 2021, at 7:06 AM, Nelmes, Karen <NelmesK@lcfla.com> wrote:

The owner representative (Passero) was responsible for vetting the project proposer. They have done so and made their recommendation. Procurement has looked over the documents. I will let Fred decide if there was anything that we should not be in agreement with at this time.

Regards,

Karen Nelmes, CPPB, NIGP-CPP
Director of Procurement



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Warehouse Hours of Operation: Monday through Friday 7:30am to 12:00pm and 12:30pm to 3:30pm

PLEASE NOTE: Florida has a very broad public records law. Most written communications to or from City officials regarding City business are public records available to the public and media upon request. Your email communications may be subject to public disclosure.

From: Sikes, Audrey

Sent: Tuesday, June 29, 2021 9:39 PM

To: Fred@KLO-Attorneys.com; Nelmes, Karen <NelmesK@lcfla.com>

Cc: Alysha Jenkins <Alysha@klolaw.com>; Bruner, Joyce <BrunerJ@lcfla.com>; Ami Mitchell Fields <FieldsA@lcfla.com>; Bruner, Joyce <BrunerJ@lcfla.com>

Subject: Fire Department Items for Agenda

Importance: High

Good evening. While out of the office last week, I spoke with Randy and I was under the impression he was sending this out to everyone to get the process in motion. I'm unsure if you all have this information or if this is the "emergency walk on item" that he has requested for the upcoming agenda. Does anyone know if these items have been fully vetted to the satisfaction of Procurement and Legal? Please advise.

Ami, if this is not what Randy is referring to for the emergency, please let us know. Thanks.

Audrey

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