



MATT MILLER, MAYOR
CITY OF ANACORTES

Memorandum

TO: My Boss, Anacortes Citizens
FROM: Matt Miller, Mayor
DATE: 26 April 2024
RE: City Council Investigation of Mayor Conduct Regarding a City Employee

City Council held an Executive Session with outside counsel (excluding the mayor and city attorney) on April 22, 2024, to discuss findings of an investigation into allegations made by a city employee of sex and pregnancy discrimination by me. The investigation was initiated by the Anacortes City Council on November 23, 2023. The investigation was conducted by an outside party retained by WCIA, the city's liability insurer, and took nearly six months.

From my perspective, the resulting investigation came from an exaggerated complaint encouraged by at least one Councilmember who is friends with, and took advantage of, an inexperienced employee to undermine and impugn my character at a cost of at least \$25,000 to the taxpayers.

The results of the investigation ultimately found all claims of sex and pregnancy discrimination false. The investigation does confirm I set a high-performance bar for all city employees, especially at the director level, most of whom get paid more than the mayor. None of these allegations were ever brought to my attention directly until the Council launched the formal investigation. After it began, I was not told of what I was being accused and the process was void of due process – a clear departure from our foundational American principles of fairness and justice.

Additionally, before the investigation was concluded the City Council hastily took action to amend Section 2 of the Municipal Code addressing "Appointive Officer" code, based simply on a non-substantiated accusation. It is also unfortunate in the process that Ms. Schuh's character was also questioned and accused of harassment. Ms. Schuh has supported three Mayors, and she expected the former employee to work closely with her during the transition into her new leadership role. Ms. Schuh is a professional in all interactions with staff, council and public and like the mayors before, I trust her judgment, decades of experience and appreciate her work ethic.

I will not apologize for my leadership and management style that has been developed over 30 years of public and private service, that some with significantly less experience have shown contempt for. While I am far from perfect in this area, over my long career, I have never been subject to anything even close to this type of investigation. I grant that most of my leadership experience was not in the political world. In my decades of government service, I have attended dozens of mandated and voluntary leadership and

Maintaining and improving the quality-of-life, reflecting community expectations through a focus on public participation and employee-mayor-council teamwork, a team dedicated to serving our citizens in a professional, efficient, and courteous manner.

management seminars including many in the areas of developing a diverse and evolving workforce and I continue to learn. I recognize and understand management norms have changed over the duration of my career and I have incorporated these changes in my leadership tool kit. Everyone on the CoA Team, including myself, can continue to grow and improve as leaders.

I have said this publicly before, specifically when the Council surprised me/staff with an urgent change to the “Appointed Officers” Ordinance. A knee jerk reaction to perceived management missteps: “I answer to the citizens of Anacortes, and if they do not like my management style or results of my administration of Executive Branch of the City, there will be an opportunity in 2025 to select new management.” A couple members of Council seem to be manufacturing a false narrative that I am creating a culture where employees are leaving because of my leadership and management. This is not supported by the actual numbers.

Mark Twain once said, “a lie will travel halfway around the world, while the truth is putting on its shoes.” It is unfortunate when something like a complaint is written down, in black and white, it “looks” real. One such example from the report is that I “yelled” at an employee. This one is easy to believe for someone that doesn’t know me and has a stereotypical view of the military – but I’m confident you could ask anyone in city hall if they ever heard me yell at an employee – the answer would be no. That is not my style at all. Ultimately, this goes to the human reality that what is heard by one person does not always match what was said. In hindsight, reviewing this investigation report, it seems many things I said to an employee were misinterpreted.

Fair, and ethical treatment of employees is the foundation of my leadership. I have high expectations of my direct reports, but they also can expect that I will reciprocate that high bar with trust. Trust built on the “three C’s” Competence, Caring and Character. I have a list of other leadership points I distributed to all Directors/Managers my first week in office that somewhat covers my leadership/management thoughts. I call it the “Ten Things” – it is actually 11 but I feel a sense of humor is something a leader should possess as well.

I stand by my leadership style and appreciate the positive impact the city staff and department heads are having on our wonderful Anacortes community, I’m proud to lead them.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matt M.", with a stylized, cursive script.