

Columbia County

Department of Human Resources

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MEMO

To: File
From: Jean Ripa, Director
Re: Analysis and Conclusion of Investigation into Complaint regarding Janet Evans
Date: October 17, 2017

On October 10, 2017, Alex Tardif, County Commissioner, met with Janet Evans, Community Justice Director. After a few moments together, I was asked to join that meeting. Commissioner Tardif relayed a complaint he had received about Janet Evans that would be defined as a sexual harassment complaint.

The specific factual allegations to consider are as follows:

1. Did Janet Evans tell PO [REDACTED] that he looked nice in his jeans in such a manner as to indicate sexual overtones?
2. Did Janet Evans say that she would like to "fuck" PO [REDACTED]?
3. Did Janet Evans make statements that PO [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] a former employee of SAFE, that the two were involved in a sexual relationship? Note: This allegation was not brought to me directly by Commissioner Tardif but was relayed to me by Janet Evans as an allegation made to her before I joined the meeting.

Overall Analysis:

I have interviewed the following County employees with notes on file:

Adult Division Supervisor Justin Hecht

Parole/Probation Officer [REDACTED]

I have also had the equivalent of an interview with Janet Evans on October 10, 2017, immediately after the meeting with Commissioner Tardif. I did not keep written notes of this meeting. She has also provided a written response to the allegations which is on file.

According to Commissioner Tardif, the offensive comments were allegedly made directly to [REDACTED] and witnessed by Justin Hecht. It should be noted that the person(s) who actually made these accusations to Commissioner Tardif has not been named except that Commissioner Tardif did say that prior employee [REDACTED] did repeat these accusations when he met with her. When I requested additional persons which Commissioner Tardif felt may be relevant, he tentatively suggested that [REDACTED] a Corrections Department employee, might be another person with whom to speak. However, I declined to interview them because it isn't alleged that they directly witnessed the comments. In addition, both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have recently been disciplined by Janet Evans and it is known to me that there are hard feelings related to the discipline, which calls into question their motives for making such allegations.

Work Crew Supervisor [REDACTED] is involved with his own disciplinary issues in the department, leading to his demotion. He filed a Step 1 grievance with his current supervisor on 10/10/17, the same day as the meeting between Commissioner Tardif and Janet Evans. Due to this event and the related lack of credibility this could give his statements and the unresolved status of that grievance, it is not appropriate for me to interview him at this time. Former employee [REDACTED] was dismissed by Janet Evans during her probationary period on May 31, 2017 and, given the circumstances, would not be considered a credible witness in this investigation.

In summary, I was given very little information on which to base this investigation. This information surrounded only the accusation that Janet Evans, at some point in time, perhaps around a year ago, told [REDACTED] that he looked nice in his jeans and that this comment was meant and taken as a sexually charged comment. The other accusation was that, at some point in time, again perhaps around a year ago, a group of people were gathered outside Justin Hecht's office and Janet Evans said something along the lines of "I'd fuck him" directed at [REDACTED]

Findings regarding Allegation #1. Did Janet Evans tell PO [REDACTED] that he looked nice in his jeans in such a manner as to indicate verbal harassment of a sexual nature?

I find this allegation to be not sustained. Janet Evans freely admits that she told [REDACTED] he looked nice in jeans. Justin Hecht reported he was present when that comment was made and corroborated Ms. Evans' statement. [REDACTED] also agrees that this comment was made to him by Janet Evans. While it is established that the statement was made, I do not find that the statement was sexual in nature. All three interviewees had the same reaction to the comment in that they all separately but strongly agree that this comment was not sexual in nature in any fashion and no reasonable person would or should have taken it to be so.

All three separately tell the same story: [REDACTED] had been in the field on a home visit and had to go home to shower and change before returning to work. When he came to work, he was wearing jeans, which is something he virtually never does. Janet Evans told him he looked nice in the jeans in order to let him know that it is okay for him to dress more casually in the office now and then. Justin Hecht says that he separately told [REDACTED] the same thing. [REDACTED] states that he did not take the comment in any sexual way and that it was no different than when he has told Janet Evans that she looks nice when she is all dressed up for special meetings. The comment was made both by [REDACTED] and Hecht that it would be a horrible thing if employees couldn't give each other honest compliments.

Findings regarding Allegation #2. Did Janet Evans say that she would like to "fuck" PO [REDACTED] [REDACTED]?

I find this allegation to be not sustained. Not only does Janet Evans vehemently deny saying this, Justin Hecht and [REDACTED] both strongly deny that she ever said such a thing and both state that she never would. There is no other information to support such a claim or reason to investigate further.

Findings regarding Allegation #3. Did Janet Evans make statements that PO [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], a former employee of SAFE, that the two were involved in a sexual relationship?

I find this allegation to be not sustained. Both [REDACTED] and Justin Hecht state that [REDACTED] was teased by several people in the department about how [REDACTED] would act around him. This also got

rolled into some inappropriate actions with a client which may have occurred with [REDACTED] (not of a sexual nature but along the lines of advice given apparently contrary to a treatment plan). [REDACTED] made it clear that none of this teasing was sexual in nature but in response to the type of personality which [REDACTED] has. He said it did make him uncomfortable. He also said he brought this up with Janet Evans (which she confirms) and that the teasing stopped from everyone. Janet Evans said that, once [REDACTED] talked to her, she did ensure that all employees stopped teasing him on this subject. Later events, which do not involve Janet Evans in any way, appear to continue the unfounded rumor of a sexual relationship between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] but these are coming from the District Attorney's Office and there is clearly no connection to Janet Evans. [REDACTED] himself states that he feels another PO may have triggered these rumors via conversation with a Deputy DA and that he does not feel that Janet is involved in any way. This will be dealt with separately.

Recommendations:

My recommendation is that this investigation be closed as there is no evidence of verbal harassment of a sexual nature by Janet Evans, as reported.

Submitted by,



Jean Ripa
Human Resources Director

