

August 24, 2021

Mayor Burge and Scappoose City Council:

Although I am no longer the City Manager, I of course follow the City's business closely and am always interested in how it is functioning. In recent weeks I have watched in disappointment as members of our City have posted and disseminated information regarding employment decisions I made during my tenure. I am even more disappointed to observe how some individuals have attempted to use those decisions and that information to influence the current city manager recruitment process.

First, I want to address the two letter recently posted on Facebook from current and former employees regarding Police Chief Norm Miller. I received both letters in the spring of 2020 and took them seriously. I immediately engaged our insurance provider, CIS, and our legal counsel. As a team we carefully reviewed the contents of the letters and brought in the assistance of two former police chiefs to advise us on next steps. We followed up with both employees on a number of occasions to alert them to the status and to gather additional information.

As we gathered information, we divided the issues into three separate categories: (1) allegations that would necessitate an employment investigation; (2) areas of concern regarding how the Chief was completing his job functions; and (3) allegations regarding fairness/mismanagement. We then systematically approached working through each one. We did initial intake on matters that would necessitate an employment investigation and quickly discovered the allegations were without merit. For example, employees who were alleged recipients of inappropriate behaviors flatly denied those behaviors occurred.

I then had several meetings with the Chief regarding the allegations of how he was completing his job functions, and we again discovered some of the allegations lacked merit but other areas could use improvement. I worked with Chief Miller to make improvements, and we changed some of our internal processes. We also engaged CIS to do a full review of our policies and procedures. As I understand it from interim City Manager Rains' recent communications, the results of those evaluations are also coming back positively.

Finally, I wanted to determine if the criticism in the letters were widely held or limited only to the individuals drafting the letter. So I engaged an independent outside party to do a complete evaluation of Chief Miller. The evaluation included 21 interviews with department employees, City employees and the City's community partners. They provided information both through interviews and by answering questions on surveys. The evaluation came back relatively positive—Chief Miller was respected externally in our community and among most employees. Based on the evaluation, I asked Chief Miller to make some improvements, and I changed my practices, such as attending weekly command meetings with staff.

These were my decisions, and I stand by them as the right decisions for our City. I made these decisions with the experience of more than 20 years successfully managing cities with police

departments and with full knowledge of the challenges Scappoose had recently faced. The City handled these issues appropriately.

I could not be more disappointed that these decisions and events are being recast to fit a different and problematic narrative. Further, as the City is keenly aware, a new city manager—such as Ms. Rains—cannot revisit and re-evaluate employment decisions I made a year before. As we know firsthand, the results of those types of actions are catastrophic.

I can only say I am sad and disappointed in recent events. As a City we can do better than this mudslinging type of behavior where confidential information about public employees is plastered over social media and members of our City lash out at those who they disagree with. I am ashamed for our City that these actions are ongoing, and I implore everyone to take a step back, take a deep breath, and work together for a better and stronger Scappoose. Only by working together can we allow our City to achieve its full potential.

Together we can make a difference,

Michael Sykes