

Ms. Robin Hayes, Mount Dora City Manger
510 North Baker Street
Mount Dora, Florida 32757

April 2, 2017

Ms. Hayes,

Regarding the Report of Ms. Dorothy F. Green vis-à-vis the complaint against our City Attorney Mr. Lonnie Groot. Ms. Green has outlined in detail a course of conduct that one can plainly see needs to be addressed immediately. Clearly Mr. Groot does not understand his role as our City Attorney and as such needs to be replaced.

First and foremost, the "Separation of Powers" is fundamental necessary in the successfully running of any form of Government. This is one of the founding precepts in which we have operated under since the founding of our Country and since the incorporation of the City of Mount Dora. Obviously, this has and continues to be breached by our Mr. Groot.

The Mount Dora City Charter, Policies and Procedures coupled with the current contract with Stenstrom, McIntosh, Colbert and Whigham P.A. define and outline this separation of powers and their respective duties.

1. **The City Council** set's policy for the running of our City government. They are the policy makers among their other duties. They alone can hire or fire the City Attorney and or the City Manager. They cannot hire or fire any other city employee. Nor should they collectively or individually attempt to influence the firing of any City employee. The City Council does not run the day to day operations of our city.
2. **The City Manager** runs the day to day operations of our city. The City Manager is at the top of all organizational charts. All Department heads and their employees are responsible to the city manager and the city manager alone.
3. **The City Attorney** operates as a contracted vendor for Legal Services. They do not set policy, they do not run the day to day operations of our city. They are not an employee of the City, they do not appear on any organizational chart. They (he) reports to the City Manager and the City Council and ultimately to the residents of our city by means of the voting process.

After reading the 22-page report of Ms. Green, and the accompanying support documents, clearly Mr. Groot and the law firm of Stenstrom, McIntosh, Colbert and Whigham P.A. have failed to perform in the capacity in which he (they) were hired.

By his own admission, Mr. Groot has attended only a handful of City Council meetings, instead he delegates his duties to various other attorneys within the firm. Mr. Groot further stated that his ability to "fully engage" "as the City Attorney has been adversely impacted as a result" Having had the hostile work environment complaint now sustained, Mr. Groots future ability to competently engage as a fully functional City Attorney is now permanently in question.

Mr. Groot's antagonistic attitude coupled with his lack of remorse and his defiance to change his hostile behavior makes this current harassment complaint only the first of many to come. His inability to act as council within the parameters of the contract while abiding by the City Policies and Procedures make him unfit for the position of City Attorney. Since Mr. Groot is the only member of the firm that is Board Certified in *City, County & Local Government Law*, which is a requirement of our city contract. When Mr. Groot is replaced, congruently the contract with the Law Firm of Stenstrom, McIntosh, Colbert and Whigham P.A and the City of Mount Dora will need to be nullified as well.

In summation, the City of Mount Dora needs responsible individuals willing to function in their respective roles, working in the best interest of Mount Dora. To accomplish this, we the Citizens of Mount Dora need transparency. We need to hire a City Attorney that is willing to work within these parameters.

How we collectively handle the current sustained complaint will impact on the moral fiber of the other 220 employees. If we retain this one individual you may expect similar costly lawsuits and subsequent settlements in our future or worse yet a mass exodus of our talented, trusted, loyal staff. Our retention rate of staff is less than desirable in some area's dismal at best. We must set the tone loud and clear that this type of behavior cannot and will not be tolerated in any shape or form.

The following two items need to happen immediately, allowing our City to heal and more forward following the standards and policies that we have set in place, fully supporting the 220 employees on staff.

1. The termination Mr. Lonnie Groot and the contract with Stenstrom, McIntosh, Colbert and Whigham P.A needs to be addressed by the City Council with your full support.
2. An audit of the payments made to Mr. Groot for unauthorized work needs to be completed with an immediate return of the unauthorized fees coupled with the costs of the independent audit if applicable.

There are so many more questions that have recently come to light. These also will need to be brought to the for front and addressed. Transparency is not just a slogan, it is the only way to assure the residents of the City of Mount Dora that we are operating on track with the best interests of Mount Dora and wellbeing of its employees first and foremost.

I further suggest if Mr. Groot is going to stay as our City Attorney, we may consider hiring Ms. Green and her Firm on a more permanent basis. We may need to include her retainer in the future workshop sessions for the upcoming budget year.

Thank you in advance for your attention in this matter,

Jim Murray

Jim Murray
1224 Normandy Drive
Mount Dora Florida 32757
(786-287-7206)

From: [Monique Sackett](mailto:Monique.Sackett@ci.mount-dora.fl.us)
To: rolfsonc@ci.mount-dora.fl.us
Subject: City Attorney
Date: Sunday, April 02, 2017 4:11:22 PM

Dear Mr. Rolfson:

bully - a noun and a verb

Three points.

All of our time is valuable and, unlike Mr. Groot, I cannot charge all of my time spent researching, drafting and final email writing to the City. Which brings me to my first point:

1) Has Mr. Groot billed the city for:

- A) the cost to write his response to the findings of the complaints
- B) the cost to listen to the City Council meeting tapes, as he has not been present for a number of meetings, *or*
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2) The finding statements by Ms. Gwen Johns contain NO reference to her sex. NONE.

I have read her statements four times. Those statements, in my opinion, reflect only Mr. Groot's condescending, disrespectful & harassing tone. So, why then did Mr. Groot choose to use the following words in his rebuttal to Dorothy Green:

"As to the orally added complaint by Ms. Johns, I was advised that the following complaints were made on the basis that she is a woman..."

You need to ask Mr. Groot directly who told him that was the basis for the complaint. The findings do not reflect that at all. To me, it reflects the thought process of Mr. Groot in regards to the complaint/complainant.

THIS statement by Ms. Johns should make all of you wonder what type of work atmosphere has been created for our incredible city employees:

"Ms. Johns did not want to file a written complaint because she was afraid of what Mr. Groot might do to her."

When ANY work environment contains fear of reprisals for standing up and asking to be treated with basic respect, what is then created is a work environment where the bullies will run wild, knowing they can get away with *anything* because no one will dare make a complaint. This environment cannot be allowed to fester.

Mr. Groot stated the following in his response to Ms. Green:

"In sum the hostility that has been directed was directed toward me upon my being appointed City Attorney. You should make that finding."

Once again, in my view, bullying Ms. Green.

Mr. Groot continues in his response by demeaning those who stood up for themselves by using the words "unsophisticated", "unprofessional", "uninformed", "absurd", and "arrogant", to describe the "complainers" and "complaints". Whereas he believes that no one should question him because according to him:

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Once again, is this a statement to bully our City Manager, Robin Hayes, into action? That's how I see it. I would like to believe that this Council has hired a City Manager that will not be bullied by ANYONE in regards to how she handles legitimate concerns about a hostile work environment for her employees...ALL her employees.

As for our City Attorney:

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Thank you for your time,
Monique Richison
745 Hilltop Court

*"When you feel a peaceful joy,
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Rumi*

From: [Monique Sackett](mailto:Monique.Sackett@ci.mount-dora.fl.us)
To: hoehstc@ci.mount-dora.fl.us
Subject: City Attorney
Date: Sunday, April 02, 2017 4:14:46 PM

Dear Ms. Hoechst:

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Rumi

From: [Monique Sackett](mailto:Monique.Sackett@ci.mount-dora.fl.us)
To: CrailM@ci.mount-dora.fl.us
Subject: City Attorney
Date: Sunday, April 02, 2017 4:19:03 PM

Dear Mr. Crail:

bully - a noun and a verb

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Rumi*

From: [Monique Sackett](mailto:Monique.Sackett@ci.mount-dora.fl.us)
To: tuckerj@ci.mount-dora.fl.us
Subject: City Attorney
Date: Sunday, April 02, 2017 4:17:55 PM

Dear Mr. Tucker:

bully - a noun and a verb

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From: [Monique Sackett](mailto:Monique.Sackett@ci.mount-dora.fl.us)
To: GironeN@ci.mount-dora.fl.us
Subject: City Attorney
Date: Sunday, April 02, 2017 4:16:37 PM

Dear Mayor Girone:

bully - a noun and a verb

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Rumi

From: [Monique Sackett](mailto:Monique.Sackett@ci.mount-dora.fl.us)
To: SlabyM@ci.mount-dora.fl.us
Subject: City Attorney
Date: Sunday, April 02, 2017 4:12:19 PM

Dear Mr. Slaby:

bully - a noun and a verb

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From: [Monique Sackett](#)
To: [Laurie Tillett](#)
Subject: City Attorney
Date: Sunday, April 02, 2017 4:06:49 PM

Dear Ms. Tillett:

bully - a noun and a verb

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