



TOWN OF BERKLEY

MASSACHUSETTS

Exhibit 14

Town Administrator

One North Main Street 02779-1336
Office: 508-824-6794
Fax: 508-822-4603
E-mail: selectmen@berkleyma.us
Townofberkleyma.com

To: Berkley Board of Selectmen

From: Matthew Chabot

Date: April 12th, 2024

RE: Formal Investigation into complaints of harassment

Several employees within the building have expressed their extreme discomfort with the work environment within our Town Hall. In the past several weeks, I have received emails and phone calls describing an aura of fear in the building, which I believe are sufficient to launch an independent investigation.

The Town of Berkley's Equal Opportunity, Retaliation, Discrimination, and Sexual Harassment policy states:

"When a complaint is received, the Town will promptly investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. The investigation will be conducted in such a way as to maintain confidentiality to the extent practicable under the circumstances. The Town's investigation will include a private interview with the person filing the complaint and with any witnesses. The Town will also interview the person alleged to have engaged in prohibited conduct. When the investigation has concluded, the Town will, to the extent appropriate inform the person filing the complaint and the person alleged to have engaged in prohibited conduct of the results of that investigation."

Action must be taken promptly. It is not a decision that I take lightly, as the investigation will incur significant emotional and monetary cost, but I strongly believe that the health and welfare our employees should be our paramount concern.

Matthew Chabot
Town of Berkley, MA
Town Administrator
Selectmen@berkleyma.us

From: selectmen.clerk@berkleyma.us
Sent: Monday, February 26, 2024 1:25 PM
To: Matt Chabot; Jfreitasbos@berkleyma.us
Subject: PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Flag Status: Flagged

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Good Afternoon,

As a follow up to our conversation earlier today, I wanted to confirm the points of the discussion for our records.

I had a conversation with Ms. Cochrane in her office today, February 26, 2024 at approximately 9:40 AM, also present in her office during the conversation was Ms. Lima. Ms. Cochrane noted to me that she will not be attending any further Board of Selectmen Meetings. She also is requesting that she not receive her Selectmen salary unless she is actively signing documents, at which point she is requesting to only get 50% of that salary. Ms. Cochrane also voiced that she intends to rescind the claim of harassments, which I told her I needed in writing. I have not yet received anything in writing. She did voice that she's afraid for her safety, but did not go into detail.

Thank you,
Holly K. Marchand
Assistant Town Administrator



Town of Berkley
Board of Selectmen

P: (508) 824-6794 **F:** (508) 822-4603

Town Hall Hours:

Mon - Thurs: 9:30am - 2:30pm

Fridays: Closed

www.townofberkleyma.com

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From: selectmen.clerk@berkleyma.us
Sent: Thursday, March 14, 2024 1:13 PM
To: Wendy Cochrane; 'Wendy Cochrane'; wcoch2448@aol.com
Cc: Matt Chabot; TMCCROHANbos@BERKLEYMA.US; 'Adam J. Costa'
Subject: Boundaries

Good Afternoon Wendy,

I wanted to reach out to you after our talk yesterday. As we discussed, I need to establish some boundaries.

It has been confirmed and clarified that I serve as Human Resources for appointment employees, only. Unfortunately, I cannot help resolve your concerns. If you feel that something needs legal attention, please contact Town Counsel regarding same. Considering I can't effectuate any true change or resolution for you, I am respectfully asking that you refrain from requesting my assistance with such complaints and concerns. In our conversation earlier, I know you mentioned that you do have a right to a confidant, and you certainly deserve same, if there is any way I can help facilitate that for you with another member of the Berkley staff that makes you more comfortable, please let me know.

I greatly appreciate the faith and trust you've put in me and your willingness to confide in me, but I am very much out of my comfort level and well beyond my realm of knowledge and experience. While I continue to have the utmost respect for you, I am uncomfortable with the situation that I am continually put in.

Thank you for your understanding,

Holly

Holly K. Marchand
Assistant Town Administrator



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From: selectmen@berkleyma.us
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2024 11:31 AM
To: 'selectmen.clerk@berkleyma.us'
Cc: 'Tabitha Mccrohan'
Subject: Public Records request regarding "opinions" on Town Administrator
Attachments: Town Administrator Evaluation.docx

Holly,

I am writing to express my thoughts on a potential public records request dated March 28th, 2024.

I will simply say that whatever should come of the fulfillment of the request, the collection of those materials good, bad, or indifferent do not constitute a formal performance review. When the time came for my evaluation which occurred in executive session on January 31st, 2024. I received very little in the way of formal feedback and no stated goals. The goals written here are my own, written on January 30th, 2024 in anticipation of and presented at that meeting.

It seems to me to be an attempt to treat this position as though I were running a political campaign and not the professional position that it is. The office of the Town Administrator is not a popularity contest. Indeed, many of the recommendations and choices made will be, by definition, unpopular.

Further, the timing of request immediately follows a verbal request from yesterday that was unrelated. I would consider this to be **retaliatory** in nature. It seems pretty clear to me that the intention of the request is coming from a place of harm and to cause stress. While I think very little will come from this, know that I feel stress from potential job loss and the sense that there is very little commitment to charting a professional path for me. I believe that consistent pressure will be put on this seat in the hope that I will simply quit or go away, which I will not do. I feel protective of those in this building, many of whom come to work in fear of harassment.

It is no secret that my start in this building was rocky, including the working relationship between me and you. Those days are, I believe, behind us and we are becoming a good team. Any items that should come to light will not change my demeanor towards you, as I believe that is the intention of the records request. There is so much work to be done to improve this Town and you deserve to be a part of it!

Thank you!

Matt



Matthew Chabot

Town Administrator

Selectmen@berkleyma.us

Phone: 774-501-0350

Fax: 508-822-4603

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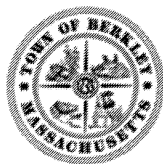
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From: selectmen.clerk@berkleyma.us
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2024 11:44 AM
To: Matt Chabot
Cc: TMCCROHANbos@BERKLEYMA.US
Subject: 3-28-24

Good Morning,

I just left the Fire Department due to chest pains caused by the added stress Ms. Cochrane is causing. My heart is OK and it is just stress. There will be a report by Monday. I brought Heather Almy with me as a witness, and as we were leaving, Ms. Cochrane walked over and approached us as we were leaving asking "what are you over here putting in a report on me for harassment" we said no and she said "Joe said so".

Thank you,
Holly K. Marchand
Assistant Town Administrator



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From: selectmen.clerk@berkleyma.us
Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2024 2:01 PM
To: Wendy Cochrane
Cc: 'Heather Almy'; Selectmen@berkleyma.us; adam@mtclawyers.com; tmccrohanbos@berkleyma.us
Subject: Re: Incident

Good Afternoon Wendy,

Thank you for your email. I am very concerned about the escalation of tension and constant berating that characterizes our ongoing communications over the past 3 months. The unfounded accusations and mind games have reached a point of no return. Further, they have caused a significant distress and impacted both our professional environment and my personal well-being. I want to reiterate my prior comments to you that you have on several occasions greatly intimidated me and are continuing to do so. I am completely uncomfortable with the manner in which you communicate with me and I no longer wish to engage in any non-professional conversations, all of which I am requesting in written email form. Your most recent FOI request directly targets me. Your persistence in contacting me and utilizing Town Hall resources to target me constitutes harassment and is completely unacceptable. Additionally, your admitted decision to confront Heather and myself at the Police Department regarding a potential harassment claim in itself is clear intimidation and harassment. I am formally requesting that you cease and desist all forms of communication outside of direct necessity as a member of the Board of Selectmen. I am asking that you please respect my boundaries and maintain professionalism at all times. Constructive dialogue is essential for an efficient workplace and must be based on facts and mutual understanding, not intimidation or unfounded accusations.

Thank you for your time.
Holly Marchand

Quoting Wendy Cochrane <WCochrane@berkleyma.us>:

Good Afternoon,

I wanted to explain in writing as I am a better writer than a speaker these days. I was in my office and Joe Freitas came in and said that Heather and Holly just walked over to the police station.

My plan was to confirm what you and I spoke about Heather this morning about Ms. Russo and her saying that people in the building were being afraid of me. I went in and said Heather over police station. Ashley said you went over to talk about what's going on over here. I said like what. She said the public information act and such.

I had to go over there to speak to Artie and I will admit it was going to be later, But under the pressure that I am under in this building I wanted to be able to defend myself for fear of being taken away.

I am being treated differently than other Selectmen but yet people still socialize and leave the building with the one I believe caused this mess. Seems a little unfair.

Please understand I meant no harm .. I just don't know who to trust anymore. Not one of the people that know the whole truth is willing to stand up. So I have to defend myself.

Heather, Please accept my apologies you have been nothing but kind. Others are choosing not to tell the truth and so I have to do what I have to do to get it out there that I am not lying. Which proves standing up for something I believe in is important to me even if I have to stand alone.

Thank you

Wendy

selectmen@berkleyma.us

From: selectmen@berkleyma.us
Sent: Monday, April 1, 2024 11:30 AM
To: 'Townaccountant@berkleyma.us'
Cc: 'selectmen.clerk@berkleyma.us'
Subject: RE:

Ashleigh,

My only point of clarification is that the Department Heads meeting was on Thursday March 21st, but your point is otherwise well taken.

If those are your wishes for communication with Mrs. Cochrane and they have been clearly communicated to her, she should certainly abide by them. If she should not, please alert this office. You deserve to feel safe within this building and I will do everything within my power to make that happen.

I appreciate your work ethic and professionalism throughout these times and I sincerely hope that you stay. My door is always open to you and you will find support here as we work through Berkley's challenges.

Thank you!



Matthew Chabot

Town Administrator

Selectmen@berkleyma.us

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From: Townaccountant@berkleyma.us <Townaccountant@berkleyma.us>
Sent: Monday, April 1, 2024 9:04 AM
To: Matthew Chabot <selectmen@berkleyma.us>
Subject:

Matt,

Good morning. I regret having to bring this up at the start of your day, but I feel it's necessary for me to address these matters before moving forward.

Since my email on February 14th, outlining my need for structured communication with Wendy, several incidents have occurred that I must bring to your attention. I find it increasingly difficult to focus on my work amidst unwarranted comments and baseless public records requests. These challenges have led me to consider leaving, although I am committed to persevering as I genuinely love my job.

On Thursday, March 24, 2024, following a department head meeting, I was engaged in a closed-door discussion with the Chief of Police, the Assistant Town Admin, and Selectman McCrohan regarding a personal matter. During this time, Wendy interrupted the meeting to discuss past communications with Harpers, causing a disturbance before leaving abruptly.

Later that same day, Wendy approached me as I was preparing to leave, she questioned if I knew she had been sectioned because of Matt, additionally in my presense she told Holly to tell Matt to increase the legal line because she will be suing the town as a result of another town resident who had submitted papers for the elected treasurers position, further disrupting my workflow.

On March 27, 2024, Wendy once again approached me, informing me of actions she had taken regarding an email I had sent. She also informed me of the unauthorized dissemination of confidential information, attributing responsibility to you. This situation has escalated, with implications for legal action and accusations against me. I want to reiterate my commitment to my role within the organization. However, the current environment is detrimental to both my productivity and well-being. As someone who values honesty and integrity, I find it exhausting to continually fact-check information provided to me.

Over the past seven months, I have endured excessive public records requests and baseless claims, both from residents outside of town hall and elected officials within. These challenges, coupled with the need to reassure colleagues like Holly about their job security, have taken a toll on my physical and mental health.

On Thursday, March 28, I made the decision to stay home due to the physical toll these situations have taken on me. I used this time to address outstanding accounting issues, despite these not being by myself, they are a necessity to move forward. Maintaining professionalism in such circumstances has become increasingly challenging.

Matt, I am drawing a line. This is my final request that Wendy refrain from approaching me without a third party present and that non-work-related contact outside of business hours ceases. My priority is my mental and physical health, which I consider more important than any job. Please understand that this is not a threat but rather a necessary step to ensure I can effectively perform my duties.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Ashleigh Haslam

selectmen@berkleyma.us

From: selectmen@berkleyma.us
Sent: Tuesday, April 2, 2024 10:51 AM
To: 'Wendy Cochrane'; 'Town Accountant (townaccountant@berkleyma.us)'
Cc: 'selectmen.clerk@berkleyma.us'; 'Jfreitasbos@berkleyma.us'; 'Tabitha Mccrohan'
Subject: Professional Communication between offices
Attachments: Code of Conduct Appointed and Elected Officials.Policy.pdf

Hello all,

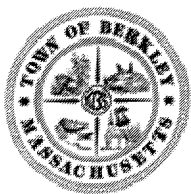
It has come to my attention that there has been a flurry of communication between these offices over the past few weeks and this deserves to be addressed.

Communication between all our offices should remain related to the work at hand, of which **there is a substantial amount**. Electronic communication between offices is an absolute must as I believe this will lead to substantially less confusion and conflict.

Please **Cc me on email communication** moving forward.

We need to foster a working environment in which employees feel safe and it is becoming clearer to me that many do not. The best solution is to keep me in the loop and follow the code of conduct attached here.

Matt



Matthew Chabot

Town Administrator

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