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Via Hand Delivery

Springfield City Council Ethics Committee
Municipal Center West
300 South Seventh Street
Room 325
Springfield, IL 62701

Re: 2022-OIG-3

To The Springfield City Council Ethics Committee:

Pursuant to ordinance, I was given a matter to investigate as Alternate Inspector General since Roger Holmes had a conflict.

My usual practice is to not use names in my report. However, since the Complainant has advised me that he is going to the meeting and sign up to speak, I am using names in this report.

Complaint

Phone call from Michael Strack ("Strack") alleging that City Clerk Employee, Rex Range ("Range"), at work used a City computer and his City email address to request information on Strack. That the information obtained was used to discredit Strack. That Range's supervisor, City Clerk Frank Lesko ("Lesko"), upon being advised of the situation did not adequately discipline Range for his actions.

Strack made many other allegations that did not in any way involve the City of Springfield, so I am not addressing those matters.

Actions

Telephone conferences, text messages and interview with Strack; review of documents provided by Strack; telephone conferences with Lesko; review of documents from Lesko; interview with Lesko and interview with Range.

Rex Range has worked for the City of Springfield for 32 years. During that time, Range has not received any discipline for anything except this matter.

There was one email by Range concerning this matter in November of 2016. Strack did not advise Lesko of this matter until July of 2020. In November of 2016, Range was married. In November of 2016, Strack was in a relationship with Range's wife. Range and his wife divorced in April of 2017. I found that Range was obtaining information on Strack in November 2016 to give to his (Range's) wife. There is nothing to show Range used his City computer or City email address any other time to obtain information on Strack. Range was on his break when he sent the email. The information Range received regarding Strack was given to his (Range's) wife. Strack at this time is no longer in a relationship with Range's ex-wife.

Lesko, upon being advised of the matter by Strack apparently 3-1/2 years later, investigated the matter and contacted City Legal about the matter. It was determined that Range did not violate any written rules or regulations of the City Clerk's Office. That it was just an "understanding" in the City Clerk's Office that the City computer should not be used for personal matters. Lesko verbally reprimanded Range and advised Range to never use the City computer or his City email address for personal matters again. From my investigation, Range is following this policy.

Therefore, I found Range did use the City computer and his City email address on this personal matter. I found that Range has not done so since. I find that the verbal reprimand from

Lesko was adequate for this situation. I do not find that Range committed any criminal acts in this matter since Range in no way was using his position at the City of Springfield to gather information on Strack. Range mentions needing information on Strack for a meeting in the November 2016 email. The meeting was with Range's wife. It is my understanding that Strack has contacted other agencies with regard to these and other allegations on Range (including contacting the State's Attorney of Sangamon County) and that no one has taken any actions or investigations on them.

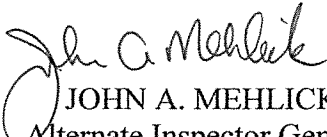
Any information Range obtained about Strack, or how Range got that information, or what Range did with that information, does not involve the City of Springfield and is of no concern to the City Council, the Mayor, or the Inspector General. In other words, the personal matters of City employees and City elected officials are that ... personal matters.

I have advised Strack of my report. I have advised Strack that if he is of the opinion that other actions should be taken, he should contact private counsel.

Recommendation

This matter should be closed and no referral is necessary.

Respectfully submitted,


JOHN A. MEHLICK
Alternate Inspector General
for the City of Springfield, Illinois

JAM:kb

cc: Mayor James O. Langfelder
James K. Zerkle, Corporation Counsel