

My name is Rick Biagi and I currently serve as the Vice President of the Park Ridge Recreation and Park District, Board of Commissioners. I was elected by the taxpayers of Park Ridge to serve as a Commissioner in 2009. My current term ends in 2013. I am speaking in my capacity as one elected Commissioner and in no way represent or warrant that my statements are those of the entire Board of Commissioners.

For the better part of the last eighteen months, I have witnessed a situation involving the Park Ridge Senior Center spiral completely out of control, for reasons that have totally evaded me up until November of 2011. I have been subjected to personal attacks by members of the Park Ridge Senior Center as has my wife. My character and credibility has been brought into question by these same people, as has the character and credibility of some of my fellow elected Commissioners and certain members of the staff. I have seen false accusations hurled at elected officials and staff of the Park District by members of the Senior Center and the Board of Senior Services, Inc. and I have seen vicious rumors and lies promulgated by these same individuals. In recent days, I have been informed of a vicious verbal assault on a member of the Park District management as well, in which a police report was apparently filed.

In good conscience, I can no longer stand by quietly and allow these rumors, lies and *ad hominem* attacks continue, without setting the record straight, once and for all.

In the following, I will attempt to address a number of the false accusations, rumors and/or outright lies that were promulgated, with facts that I can personally attest to in my capacity as an elected official. Moreover, I intend to discuss the substance of this communication with the entire Board at the Committee of the Whole Meeting on Thursday, January 5, 2012.

Q. Was Teresa Grodsky fired?

A. No, she tendered her resignation to Executive Director Gayle Mountcastle.

Q. Did the Executive Director induce Teresa Grodsky to retire?

A. Yes, to the extent that Ms. Grodsky was made aware of certain issues relating to her performance and was strongly encouraged to retire in light of the alleged transgressions.

Q. Was a formal termination of Ms. Grodsky being considered by the Executive Director?

A. Yes.

Q. Why was formal termination of Ms. Grodsky being considered?

A. In the autumn of 2011, it came to the attention of the Executive Director and the District's Attorney that confidential communications between and among members of the Park Board, its Executive Director and/or its Legal Counsel were being given by Commissioner Steven Vile to Teresa Grodsky and other members of the Senior Services Inc. (SSI) Board. Some of those communications were covered by the attorney-client privilege. All of the communications dealt with internal policy discussions and/or legal strategy as it related to the ongoing operation of the Senior Center and/or the negotiations between the Board, the PRRPD and SSI.

The emails also revealed that Ms. Grodsky, Commissioner Vile and certain members of the SSI Board and at least one of their legal counsel were actively sharing and commenting on the privileged and confidential communications from the Board/PRRPD and/or the Park District attorney. It is my understanding that Ms. Grodsky was questioned in detail by the Executive Director regarding her participation in these actions and that, following the advice of the District's Legal Counsel as well as the counsel for the District's insurer (PDRMA), the Executive

Director would seek Ms. Grodsky's agreement to retire. At no time during these initial investigations or consultations with Legal Counsel was the Board, *en banc*, apprised of the situation. It was not until the November Board meeting that the Board was consulted in closed session, with Counsel for the District and PDRMA present. Copies of all relevant emails are being forwarded to the *Park Ridge Herald Advocate* and the *Park Ridge Journal-Topics* newspapers.

Q. Prior to October/November 2011, was there any indication that the Executive Director or other staff wanted to terminate Ms. Grodsky for cause or for any other reason.

A. No.

Q. Was Ms. Grodsky given compensation in return for her agreement to retire/resign.

A. It was agreed that she would be able to continue to be employed by the PRRPD until January 1, 2012, in order to achieve certain employment time periods related to pension calculations. When Ms. Grodsky signed the Supplemental Severance Agreement on 1/2/2012, she was entitled to get 4 weeks vacation time and 4 personal days, which will take her through 2/6/12 and from then until 3/30/2012 she will receive \$11,065.40 in pay; she has acknowledged that this is more money, compensation and benefits than she would be entitled to receive from the Park District otherwise. As of 1/2/2012, she has been placed on personal leave and will perform no further work for the District.

Q. Was there a concerted effort by the Board to have Ms. Grodsky induced to retire?

A. No. There were several individual Commissioners who did not oppose losing her as an employee. However, the hiring/firing of employees other than the Executive Director is generally not a Board matter. It would, in my opinion, take the action of the entire Board in open session to vote affirmatively to direct the Executive Director to terminate the employment of a particular employee; however, such a direction is not necessary, as the Executive Director has the power and authority to hire, fire, or otherwise negotiate (within certain limits) the termination or departure from employment of any subordinate employee when warranted. During my tenure the Board has never instructed the Executive Director to terminate an employee.

Q. Was the Board briefed in closed session on the circumstances surrounding Ms. Grodsky's departure?

A. Yes.

Q. Did the Board take any action related to Ms. Grodsky following those closed session discussions?

A. No.

Q. At any time did the Board instruct the Executive Director or any other staff member to close the Senior Center?

A. No.

Q. Did the issue of the Betty Kemnitz trust/bequest have anything at all to do with Ms. Grodsky's departure?

A. No.

- Q. Is the Board and/or the PRRPD District involved in any legal action regarding the Betty Kemnitz trust/bequest?
- A. The Park District Attorney has been informed by the attorney for the trustee of the Kemnitz Trust that he will be filing such a lawsuit imminently for the purpose of having a court determination made as to the rightful recipient of the approximately \$335,000 bequest to the Senior Center. It is anticipated that the Illinois Attorney General's office will be a party to the lawsuit, as overseer of charitable foundations and the like.
- Q. Did Commissioner Vile have the authority to share attorney-client privileged documents with the SSI Board and/or Ms. Grodsky?
- A. No, and by doing so, Commissioner Vile not only arguably waived the privilege, without authorization, belonging to the Board and the Park District but he also waived the privilege belonging to 38,000 taxpayers.
- Q. Is the Park District and the Board committed to maintaining vibrant programming and socializing activities for seniors at 100 S. Western?
- A. Yes.

**Rick Biagi**

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