

Good Evening Amanda:

I live in the district that you represent. So first, thank you for all that you do to support our community. It isn't always easy, but it is appreciated.

It is my understanding that Mayor Sorenson has requested feedback from the community prior to Monday's council meeting regarding the recent article that has appeared in the Sheboygan Press. I must say after reading the article, I was incredibly disappointed in the leadership of our city and how they have handled and are continuing to handle issues outlined in the article by Maya Hilty including unaddressed racial slurs in leadership meetings, retaliating against employees including the former HR Director for opposing sexual harassment of a female employee...and much more that has not come out yet. The quotes from the City Administrator, Todd Wolf, were incredibly disturbing as they demonstrated his retaliation in action when he said, *"Depending on how the (newspaper article) is written, we're going to reprimand further a good employee, and we're going to end up trashing another employee who obviously let the comment out," he said. "That employee is going to have problems because let's just face it, people are not going to trust the safe space anymore."* This shows clearly a leader that is not "getting it" and now he has demonstrated it to the entire city through this article.

Although I am semi-retired now, during my past corporate career I worked in executive leadership positions at several fortune 500 companies managing large operations of 200+ employees. And, very early in my career I also worked as an HR Director consulting managers, directors, and executives on how to navigate difficult employee relations issues while also building a positive and collaborative work culture. When needed, I also investigated sexual harassment and workplace retaliation issues if they arose. I have taught corporate-wide seminars to educate leaders about sexual harassment and workplace retaliation. The reason I mention my background is only to demonstrate that I speak from experience when I say, based on the article I read, Mr. Wolf is handling this in the exact opposite way than he should. He sounds like someone that may be in over his head in terms of his ability to manage the leadership needed in our city and he shows an inability to inspire a positive culture in the workplace.

I can also say from experience that others will emulate the leadership at the top. So, if this is not addressed with a sense of urgency and conviction very quickly, it will continue to spin out of control and will ensnare others as well, including Mayor Sorenson. With no HR Director in place....ironically because she is suing also suing the city for workplace retaliation...this is a very dangerous crisis of leadership for our city. Vicky Schneider is also an

incredibly professional person and one of high integrity. She is well-respected in the community. It takes a lot for someone like that to file a lawsuit. This is not going to bode well for Todd Wolf and the City's Leadership as her case moves forward while the attitudes demonstrated in this article continue to perpetuate. It will take bold action, and quickly, to right this ship.

Based on my past professional experience in this area I would recommend the following next steps:

1. Hire an external third party to conduct an independent investigation into the internal complaints that are swirling around, sexual harassment, workplace retaliation, and the secrecy that employees are being told they must abide by when they see something improper happening within the leadership ranks.
2. Establish an interim HR function or third party consultant that employees can go to with ongoing and/or outstanding complaints and concerns about workplace retaliation. If you don't establish this and clearly communicate it to the entire workforce, more and more employees will seek out attorneys, etc. and you will quickly have a class action suit on your hands. If the only source for resolving a workplace retaliation complaint is to go to Todd Wolf who has now been publically quoted retaliating against the leader concerned about the "N-word" in a meeting you will continue to dig a hole on this issue. It will get worse before it gets better if you have no path to address these issues.
3. It may even be time to consider suspending Todd Wolf until an independent investigation can be completed.
4. Mayor Sorenson should make a public statement denouncing what is going on, committing to investigation and quick action based on that investigation. That is what he should do publicly, and privately there should be meetings held within the workplace outlining the commitments and next steps that will be taken.

Leadership starts at the top. When that leadership poisons the culture through their actions it is difficult to recover and it can spin out of control quickly if bold steps are not taken. I encourage the Council and Mayor Sorenson to take bold actions on this one. It won't be easy, but it is necessary.

I will be watching to see the steps that are taken next. I love this community and as a member of it, I think we all need to demand excellence.

Thank you for allowing me to share this feedback. Sincerely, Brenda Richterkessing

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