

Todd Sampson's Issues with the City Manager

Let's look at the performance of the City Manager.

Since he has been here, Mr. Helfenberger hired two assistant city managers, an IT Director, and a HR Director.

They are all gone.

One of the assistant's was qualified in water and waste water; the other had no experience in those fields. Both Assistant City Managers resigned or were forced to resign. IT Director Mandy Rand was a qualified IT Director. She was forced to resign.

The most recent hire, HR Director Ami Fields, while she didn't have recent government experience, has a wealth of business experience and an MBA. That didn't work out either.

Before Ms. Fields was fired, the City's long time City HR Director resigned. Many people thought she abandoned ship.

The Interim Director of IT quit after a few weeks, and was so disenchanted that he refused to speak with the City Manager and forwarded his resignation directly to the City Council.

Over a month ago at a public meeting the City Manager was asked to provide a report regarding the issues surrounding the resignation of Mandy Rand. That report still has not been provided.

Months ago, Councilman Greene asked City Manager Helfenberger to provide documentation and begin the process for his annual evaluation. Nothing was done.

City Manager Helfenberger has missed crucial meetings with the County in which the City was harmed by his not being in attendance. When the County called a meeting regarding the industrial park proposal, according to City Attorney Koberlein, both Mr. Koberlein and Mr. Sweat were told not to attend. Mr. Koberlein attended anyway, but was not authorized to speak for the City.

This has damaged our relationship with the county.

In November 2020, during the City Council meeting, the City Manager, the Assistant City Manager, the Director of Utilities, and the Director of City Water could not explain why the City Water Use Permit had been reduced.

Although the City Manager knew what the answer was, it was not presented.

The Blanche has been problematic since its inception. In late 2020 the City had an opportunity to recapture some of the money it owed IDP due to what some thought was a breach of contract. The City Manager never provided the written legal opinions and memos from attorneys which showed that the City had a very good chance to win a lawsuit against the Blanche.

Currently, morale among the city workforce is at the lowest I have ever seen it, and I've lived in the City a long time.

Recently, all but one of the primary city directors came out against the termination of HR Director Ami Fields and asked the City Manager to reconsider his decision.

The City Manager refused.

The City Managers recent performance regarding access to the email server by the City Clerk was another instance where the City Manager showed that he is incapable of making a decision and standing by it. This caused the latest City IT Director to resign from his responsibilities over the IT Department. It also caused the Supervisor over the IT department to quit. The City Manager never memorialized Mr. Dyal's management promotion writing over the IT Department, which is a bad management practice.

I also understand there was a time, which we just heard about, when the City Manger refused to check or use his email because he thought it was being hacked. This calls for an investigation and a reason from the City Manager on why he did not ask for one. It is clear that a forensic investigation of the email server may have revealed the truth and substance of the email issues, if they existed.

These are just some of the issues in which City Manager Joe Helfenberger has played a part.

Lake City is in trouble because of ineffective management, and it is time that Lake City find another City Manager who can lead us out of this deepening mess.

It's time for us to make a hard decision. It's time for us to move forward. It's time for us to make a change and move in a direction that brings people together, instead of tearing things apart.