

**Statement of Councilman Todd Sampson
September 6, 2022
Delivered at the City Council Meeting**

Transcribed using AI

Mayor Witt, Lake City is in trouble. Your last-minute motion to hire Interim City Manager Paul Dyal without any warning to the rest of the City Council or the public was unfair to the Council and the public.

This was not a good look for Lake City, even though some residents at the time thought this was a great idea.

Mr. Mayor, you purposely slowed the hiring process and the execution of the agreement with headhunter Colin Baenziger. This was not what the Council agreed to.

Mr. Mayor, your sudden nomination of Mr. Dyal for permanent City Manager and stalling the attempt at following a hiring process that was open and transparent speaks for itself.

You are both an attorney and certified public accountant. Your complete disregard of asking for any background check or credit check, a standard processes in this type of hiring, could be nothing but intentional. Your blind-eye of any review of Mr. Dyal's personnel file, which should have included grievances from other employees, also speaks for itself.

Mr. Mayor, you knew of Mr. Dyal's mismanagement of his personal finances while you were ignoring any mention of vetting Mr. Dyal.

That you were his attorney for his latest bankruptcy makes sense of your silence.

Mayor Witt, with proper vetting, this Council and the Citizens of Lake City would have known Mr. Dyal had at least two bankruptcies and ongoing financial problems in present time.

Mr. Dyal's ongoing financial problems and inability to manage them is definitely the disqualifying factor in hiring him to oversee an organization with a \$ 70-plus-million-dollar budget.

During Mr. Dyal's recent financial difficulties, he was earning over \$80,000 annually. With his finances in disarray, his ability to manage the City's finances or prepare a budget must be questioned.

Mr. Dyal's recent unilateral gifting of a half-a-day off to every employee in the City without Council approval was not legal.

There is no evidence that this is an authority assigned to him. It is unknown if you spoke with Mr. Dyal about the four-hour gift to City employees. Maybe you did; if so, you also do not have the authority.

It would appear that, at the minimum, Mr. Dyal is responsible for the tens-of-thousands of dollars in pay that is owed to the City's employees.

Even though Mr. Dyal has been a director for some time, it is evident that he is clueless about the City's personnel policy.

The City Council has approved personnel policies.

City Personnel policy 2014-01 section 6.03 titled PROMOTIONS states that all vacancies be open for three working days for internal applicants.

While Interim City Manager, Mr. Dyal promoted Demetrious Johnson to Assistant City Manager. Mr. Dyal never opened the application process, nor did he post the position for internal review.

HR Director Hubert Collins did not ask Mr. Johnson to fill out an application, nor did he ask HR to do a background or credit check on Mr. Johnson.

The City has qualified directors, and others, who could have applied for the Assistant City Manager position if they had known about it.

The City's workers and taxpayers expect that the City Council would require strict compliance with the policies it approves – policies that ensure fairness.

Speaking about fairness – I must bring up how the current administration treats women.

The City Manager and HR Director are not treating female employees equally and fairly.

It has been brought to my attention that female department heads are being undercut in their jobs. From what I have heard, the Interim City Manager and Human Resources Director are actively searching for grounds to push certain directors out of their positions with

unprofessional, unapproved practices and contrary to fair labor standards.

It also appears that the Interim City Manager and others may be attempting to cover up the inappropriate treatment of subordinate women by their male supervisors.

This inappropriate treatment creates a hostile workplace environment, is illegal, and is unacceptable by contemporary standards.

At the end of last week, Interim City Manager Dyal requested that I meet with him. I believe he wanted to discuss an incident between a former female City worker and a Department Head.

I was unwilling to be persuaded or strong-armed to accept a one-sided, uninvestigated narrative. I'm not interested in being part of a cover-up.

I am aware that you, Mr. Mayor, and the other Councilman, may have met with Interim City Manager Dyal and received or exchanged information regarding this former female City employee.

Mr. Mayor, I have to say I am truly blessed. Every day I wake up in the morning and am surrounded by the women in my life. I have five beautiful daughters and their mother. My wife and I protect our girls to the best of our ability. Some of what we do is to make sure that we act responsibly and teach them responsibility by acting by example. We ensure they understand they are to be treated equally – without prejudice toward their gender.

I can't be true to my five girls by turning my back on what I have been hearing and reading lately about the goings-on in Lake City.

I cannot be faithful to the example my wife and I try to set by turning my back on what seems to be the sorry state of affairs of Lake City regarding certain personnel practices and the unfair treatment of women.

For the next City Council meeting, I am asking for resolutions to be included authorizing investigations by the Council for the following: 1) the recent unilateral closing of the City for four hours by Interim Manager Paul Dyal; 2) the failure of both the City Manager and HR Director to determine if they violated the City personnel policy, by not advertising and requesting applications for the vacant Assistant City Manager position, and not having the newly hired assistant city

manager fill out an application or have his background checked; 3) the treatment of certain female City employees by the Interim City Manager and the HR Director.

Finally, I am making a motion for reconsideration of the motion to hire Paul Dyal as City Manager of the City of Lake City, pending complete vetting, including a comprehensive background check and a mandatory credit check.

Mr. Mayor, I am asking that you to second that motion, or lacking your second, that the motion be seconded by and passed by this Council.

The citizens of Lake City; the citizens of Columbia County; even the citizens of the state of Florida, they're the people that fund the City. They're the folks that give us our money to make things operate. We owe them to make this happen.

I'm asking for a second on that motion.