

Dear City Administrators,

After reading the article in the Lake Worth Harold and obtaining a copy of the undated/unsigned letter of complaint about the code supervisor and his executive secretary I feel it is necessary to come forward NOT as the author of the original letter but as a previous employee at code compliance.

What prompted me to file this complaint involves these three issues:

- 1- The truth should be heard and employees should not be treated in this manner.
- 2- The fact that it will not be acknowledged without a signature
- 3- The lack of concern and response in the article from Mr. Harnois if nothing else qualifies a good portion of this supervisor's mindset. "Being a former cop, I have my ideas who might have written it."

My position with code compliance lasted 4 years and I encountered just about everything that the mystery letter highlights therefore will qualify the working environment as hostile, stressful (initiated by supervisor's lack of management and people skills), intimidating, demeaning and downright dreadful. The residents of Lake Worth were great to work with it was our supervisor and his executive secretary that causes concern.

At one point on May 11, 2006 a letter was drafted and signed by myself and six co-workers addressing these same issues. This letter was never forwarded; we were told we could not file a class action complaint we had to file separately. This fractured the group and it was never acted on for fear of retaliation. A copy of this letter will be enclosed.

Retaliation did come for me some time later maybe because the thought that I was the instigator or for whatever irrational reason code supervision uses. Months later I was given a notice to appear for a termination hearing. This is after four years of never having a single negative verbal/written reprimand or performance review.

This turned out to be a very unprofessionally documented and presented case, even so I opted out for a three day unpaid leave. It was that of more hostility and harassment. BUT it did show other employees ~ we can make things hard for you whenever we want to.

If you check this has happened to others since my voluntary retirement. This little tidbit of information I give you so this is not discounted as "he is just a disgruntled former employee". Not me ~ never been happier ~ just believe in the truth.

Robert (Bob) Helta

Dated: 02/12/08

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What I can confirm during my time working at code will be underlined and highlighted in yellow.

I am writing this on the behalf of the Code Compliance staff. They would voice their concerns themselves; however they fear retaliation and loss of their jobs.

Attached you will find a definition of a "Hostile Workplace Environment" which Mr. Armand Harnois, Code Compliance Director has created.

Over the past two years, his behavior and attitude has taken a significant turn. He has become arrogant, hostile, demeaning, threatening, moody and nasty. His sudden outbursts have caused great concern for the staff.

He tries to supervise using intimidation and condemnation. This type of supervision is creating low moral and no sense of teamwork within the Code Compliance Department. His has total lack of

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concern and compassion for the feelings of the staff. He fails to recognize how his demeaning and derogatory comments affect the moral of the staff.

Mr. Harnois blames his superiors at City Hall (Ms. Laura Hannah) for his extreme stress, high blood pressure, mood swings, migraines and weight gain. He has stated that Ms. Hannah has created extreme stress for him therefore; he takes his frustration out on his staff.

He claims to be going through male menopause and is on medication and steroids to balance his body. Perhaps he is unbalanced or that his medication is affecting his judgment. Mr. Harnois seems incapable of performing his duties especially if he is under stress, suffering migraines and has several other health issues. "It is time for new management".

Staff has noticed that his temper and anger has been increasing. Staff has grave concern for their well being, safety and welfare. It has come to a point where staff has to take a deep breath before entering the office; unable to anticipate just what kind of mood Mr. Harnois will be in. Examples are given below.

Exhibit 1: "Hostile Work Environment refers to harassment by supervisors, managers, directors and coworkers. Hostile Work Environment consists of a condition where employees cannot do their jobs without feeling harassed or threatened".

Example: Mr. Harnois is constantly reminding his staff that he was a cop with the City and he has been trained to recognize the criminal in everyone. He has even told some of his staff that he has them under investigation, pending disciplinary action. The staff believes that this is threatening behavior. He treats his staff as if they were criminals and they feel like they are in jail. They were actually told that talking and laughing is not allowed in the office. He believes that all code violators are criminals as well. He makes derogatory comments about them. These are the people of our community.

Exhibit 1: "Hostile workplace is the result of suppression of people's natural ability to express themselves. Attempts to squash a person's ability to be creative and do their work in a way that is most productive for the individual".

Example: During staff meetings; staff has occasionally voiced opinions and made suggestions in order to increase productivity, only to be disregarded, suppressed and dismissed by Mr. Harnois. His motto: "My Way or the Highway". He has even told some of his staff if they don't like it "find another job".

During Special Magistrate hearings; Mr. Harnois doesn't hesitate to embarrass or humiliate inspectors in front of the public. During the hearings, Mr. Harnois constantly interrupts the inspectors during their testimony, telling them what to say and jumping up to answering questions for them. After each Special Magistrate hearing; Mr. Harnois conducts a meeting with the inspectors and ridicules everything that the inspectors said and did at the Special Master hearing.

Inspectors are constantly being chastised and belittled almost daily in front of their coworkers for not understanding new code instructions. Mr. Harnois is constantly changing instructions on a daily basis and then constantly he contradicts the changes that he made. Thus, causing confusion and lack of direction.

Exhibit 1: "Exposure to chronic verbal abuse is a guarantee for allergy attacks, colds, rashes, depression and every sort of misery. People who are unhappy, unhealthy or angry do not work

hard".

Example: Several employees have developed heart problems, high blood pressure and skin rashes.

Exhibit 1: "Hostile Work Environment refers to harassment by coworkers. Hostility consists of: one-up-man ship and excessive competition".

Exhibit 2: These Exhibits show several e-mails that Ms. Nichols has sent to Mr. Harnois regarding her co-workers. She is apparently busy watching and reporting on her coworkers to Mr. Harnois.

Exhibit 3: Ms. Nichols seems to be competing against the other secretary's and then declares herself as being a fast worker and pats herself on the back.

Since Ms. Nichols is busy watching her co-workers, she can't seem to get her work done during working hours. She is constantly requesting overtime. She seems to be the only one that is granted overtime. Several staff members have repeatedly asked for overtime; only to be told that there is no money in the budget. Favoritism is suspected here.

Exhibit 1: "Do Not Ignore the Issue of Workplace Romance". "It can create a hostile environment for coworkers not involved in the relationship. The issue of Workplace romances should be addressed and discussed not ignored".

Example: Dana Nichols, Code Secretary and John Kuntzman, Building Inspector have been seen leaving the Code Enforcement building on several occasions; late nights and on Saturday's. Several times Mr. Kuntzman has picked up Ms. Nichols for lunch using a City vehicle. It is rumored that they are having an affair. City property should not be used for this kind of behavior.

Over the past two years six people have left the Code Compliance Department to seek employment elsewhere; three of them were long term employees. After much humiliation and degrading remarks from Mr. Harnois they resigned from the City. Instead of losing more valuable employees, perhaps Mr. Harnois should be the one to leave/resign.

It is time for new management! The staff can no longer work under these HOSTILE circumstances. During the middle of the work day, Mr. Harnois decided to take down partitions dividing the desks into cubicles. He started to unscrew the nuts and bolts from the partitions, when they would not come loose he got agitated and frustrated. He shook the partition with such extreme force that it fell over onto an inspector's desk, knocking everything onto the floor including the computer monitor.

Thankfully the inspector was not sitting at his desk, he could have gotten hurt! Mr. Harnois stated that he took the partitions down because he felt everyone was talking about him. Perhaps he is also paranoid.

These are serious allegations and should not be taken lightly. Staff requests a full investigation. Upon completion staff is confident that you will ask for Mr. Harnois resignation.

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\*Note- Make it clear I am not the author of this letter but I do support underlined portions of it. With a signed complaint you should be able to investigate this matter. Please keep me informed. You should be in possession of the original exhibits so I will not include them. If for any reason you need a copy of the exhibits please contact me.  
Respectfully,

Robert Helta

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