

Public Comment 01/16/2024  
Judge Kromkowski

January 16, 2023

To the Board of Commissioners and County Administrator,

We have all read the report and/or viewed the presentation of John Scholten. His findings appear to echo the staff and elected official comments provided first to Commissioner Wessell and then to Commissioner Ross. We do not know who said what nor have any intention of sanctioning any further efforts to secure the notes from or identity of those who provided comments. They were assured of confidentiality and that must be honored. To do less, would be a disservice to the county employees. Further, we reject the notion that all three of these individuals receiving comments have fabricated or exaggerated their observations. The comments referred to in Mr. Scholten's report are similar to complaints that some of us have heard or overheard from staff. It is time for the Board to move on and accept these findings as either perceptions or reality. It does not really matter which they are. To reject them would be disrespectful not only to those who gathered the comments, but also to the 85 staff that participated in the recent survey. It would also send a very unflattering message to the public and to all future personnel applicants if no action is taken on employee concerns. Staff participated with the expectation that the Board would take their comments seriously and in a timely fashion.

To that end, we support the following actions recommended by Mr. Scholten:

- The Board should engage in training to assist in the re-dedication of providing true governance.
- That the Board, Departments and Offices commit to develop a code of conduct based on civil discourse, cooperation, transparency, acceptance that we are all here with duties specific and agreement that we will not overstep our prescribed boundaries.
- That we all commit to the prior Board approved decision to move forward with the separation of Finance and Human Resource from the responsibility of the County Clerk's Office, adopt appropriate parameters for the two offices and establish a clear chain of command for review or approval of their decisions.
- That the Board begin the process of conducting an independent wage scale study for all county employees.

- That the County Administrator provide leadership for the appropriate governance of county affairs. That the Board welcome the comments of the County Administrator at all Board meetings. In practice, such comments would not dominate the conversation or usurp the role of the Commissioners, but provide information, context, and historical background to assist the Commissioners in making decisions.
- That all elected officials and department heads work together to improve and encourage communications with and among all staff for the betterment of Leelanau County, including but not limited to investigating trainings that improve and encourage communication and cooperation.
- That steps are taken to assure all employees that their concerns will not be met with reprisals, to establish the process for voicing such concerns and to take action to appropriately respond to such concerns if they arise.

We appreciate the efforts of our current County Administrator. She stepped into a sea of conflict, hidden agendas and now the recent exodus of valued employees. We do not believe that Jared Prince, Shawn Cohen, Laurel Evans or Darcy Weaver would place the blame of their departures at Deb Allen's feet. Candid conversations with these former employees may reveal that they also could not co-exist with the growing unease in our county work environment.

We intend to take a stronger leadership role in combatting the "malaise" among staff.

Sincerely,



Joseph Hubbell  
Leelanau County Prosecutor



Michael Borkovich  
Leelanau County Sheriff



Marian Kromkowski  
Leelanau County Probate Judge



John A. Gallagher  
Leelanau County Treasurer



Jennifer Grant  
Leelanau County Register