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Investigation exonerates Carpentersville village manager of allegations

By Madhu Krishnamurthy

An independent investigator looking into allegations of gender discrimination, retaliation and harassment made by a former Carpentersville village employee against Village Manager J. Mark Rooney determined there was no validity to the claims.

The allegations were made by the village's former human resources director, Linda Mogren, who resigned in May under a separation agreement with the village. At the time, neither village officials nor Rooney would discuss the reasons that led to Morgan's departure.

Mogren, a village employee since 1998, served as human resources director for nine years. Several attempts to reach her and her attorney were unsuccessful.

Mogren refused to cooperate with the investigation citing her severance agreement with the village in which both parties agreed to refrain from disparaging statements. Mogren was assured she would have immunity for any comments made during the investigation, according to independent investigator Dennis Walsh with the legal firm Klein, Thorpe and Jenkins.

The firm previously served as the village's attorney and was chosen to do the investigation because of Walsh's reputation, Village President Ed Ritter said.

Walsh interviewed Rooney and several other village employees who either witnessed interactions between Rooney and Mogren or could speak to the allegations, and reviewed numerous documents of communication between Mogren and Rooney, according to documents obtained by the Daily Herald through a public records request.

In an April 28 letter, Mogren claimed Rooney retaliated against her when she told him he should not refer to a female employee as a "manipulative cute blond," per the report.

Among Mogren's allegations were that Rooney "had a pattern of replacing women senior staff over 40 years old with males" and that he was trying to force her out after 15 years of service. She also claimed Rooney made several threats of physically harming village employees.

According to the investigator's report several employees interviewed said Rooney would make references to his military service, but never expressly threatened to harm any employees. The police chief also looked into that allegation and determined it was unfounded.

The investigation determined Rooney, formerly village manager in Wheeling, didn't break any state or federal laws or violate village policy, and acknowledged he is a demanding manager.

Ritter said the report puts an end to the matter.

"I have a lot of confidence in our manager, the way he operates and how careful he is in anything that he does involving personnel," Ritter said.

Ritter's only comment about Mogren was that she was "an excellent employee."

"She chose to leave and she was not forced to leave. She was a good employee while she was here," he said.

Ritter said the village hired the independent investigator only to avoid potential litigation.

"We're being proactive," he said. "We did not have to investigate. We could have just left it. But I didn't want to do that because sometimes when you just leave something, it seems like you are afraid to investigate."

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