

June 13, 2024

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Martha Shoemaker, First Selectwoman,

Your letter of June 12, 2024 indicated that I have the right to file a written response. I am taking this opportunity to do so. While I understand that this will not alter the outcome, I believe that my personnel file should have a more balanced reflection of the events in question.

Your earlier letter reached me via email at 1:05 PM on June 3, 2024. It listed twelve concerns but provided no documentary support for any of them. The following day, June 4, 2024, at 10:50 AM, I requested that I be provided the email communications that formed the basis of the list of concerns. In response, at 3:13 PM, I received from Jill Karrenberg a 50-page document containing emails sent to and by me. Of the five concerns raised in your letter of June 12, 2024, only one is supported by the materials sent to me by Ms. Karrenberg. If there are emails or other documents which support the other four concerns, they were not provided to me despite my written request for them. That I am facing disciplinary actions due to documents I was not provided is fundamentally unfair.

I have located the June 8, 2023 email sent by Mark Comstock in which he says that Susan Zilke is not tethered to reality. I append a copy of his email to this letter for your review.¹ In light of this, I would like the letter of June 12, 2024 amended to remove this claim.

Of the five concerns in the June 12, 2024 letter, four are related to interactions involving individuals who have been repeatedly hostile to me, and have created a hostile work environment for me. (Of those four, one is a false accusation.) None of the allegations indicate that I have been unpleasant or unkind to these individuals. To the contrary, any concerns or criticisms I had were alleged to have been voiced to third parties. (Again, there is no documentary evidence provided for any of these statements.) As I am not able to respond directly to individuals who attack me, I must rely upon my superior to make sure that I am not unreasonably attacked or threatened. Based upon your two letters and the conversations we have had, you have not voiced any willingness to do so, leaving me exposed to further harmful words from these individuals. Now they will act with impunity.

¹ I would note that I specifically stated in my June 5th letter, without having access to my emails, that I recalled Mr. Comstock making statements like this. It turns out that I was entirely correct and his words were improperly attributed to me. That should not have happened.

I would also note that I have been here since August 29, 2022, and during that time I have performed four separate jobs: planner, zoning enforcement officer, wetlands enforcement officer and flood plain manager. I have also provided support for bodies not directly tied to my job responsibilities at all, such as the Affordable Housing Committee, the Halls Road Improvement Committee, the Historic District Committee and the Shoreline Gateway Committee. I performed all of this during my theoretical 30-hour per week schedule, staying longer without additional compensation each week to ensure that all tasks were completed. None of your concerns touch upon the underlying quality of my work, which I have received numerous compliments for. If I am to be judged for what are alleged to be my five (now four) worst moments in my year and nine-month period of employment here, my file should also reflect the overall quality of my work.

I hope to continue to perform quality work for the Town of Old Lyme. I will faithfully undertake each of the actions spelled out in your June 12, 2024 letter. I can always improve my job performance and will continually try and do so.

Please place this correspondence in my personnel file, along with the correspondence I provided on June 5, 2024.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond.

Very truly yours,

Eric Knapp