

Submitted
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100188

Dear Charter Officers, Commissioners and Mayor:

I would like to address each of four topics briefly, insofar as they reflect a continuous downward spiral of communication between City personnel and members of the public like me.

1. First I made a public records act request at the second Town Hall meeting. It has been ignored entirely for nine days, contrary to the Florida Public Records Act and State Constitution provisions for access in timely and reasonable fashion. I am presenting a broader written request now.
2. The fiefdom of the City Attorney is altogether out of control. He has re-advertised to fill a position with a junior attorney for \$78,000 to \$112,000 salary. Alachua County seems to need a more experienced attorney at a salary range nearly \$20,000 below that sum. But the City Attorney's office already is bloated apparently with 17 slots for lawyers and assistants. Yet that Office is not slated for any reduction even in the worst case budget scenario.
3. Whatever happened to Butterfly City? In the City Manager's Report at this time last year, the claim was made that the Communications Office was working with the Butterfly Education Project to get signs posted at the 11 entrances to Gainesville, to note its designation as a Butterfly City. A year later, after additional meetings and exchanges, nothing has taken place. More than \$1,200 has been raised privately For the signs. A sign maker received written instruction for the first time yesterday about, possible locations. More significantly perhaps Nothing on the Gainesville home page indicates any reference to Butterfly City anywhere in the files except for the 2009 state of the City address by Mayor Hanrahan. Who runs this town? Who runs this town? The Charter Officers run this town again.
4. At the first meeting I attended led by the apparently one-term incumbent, I warned that this Commission was moving away from the free style of communications at public meetings encouraged by the former mayor.

I was assured then that, if anything, Mayor Hanrahan had ordered police to remove people from the podium frequently. However, the Gainesville Sun on June 21 reported acknowledgement by the Mayor that he has had to have more people removed than she did throughout her six years, in his

first few weeks. Both Mayor Lowe and Commissioner Poe professed to not understand why the public had become more boisterous.

It would be clear to anybody who sat through a meeting under the present and past leadership. Mayor Hanrahan listened, and encouraged an exchange of ideas. Like the one-term Mayor Bussing, Mayor Lowe chooses to hear without any sign that he is listening except to what he already believes. At the town meeting I attended, Mayor Lowe spoke up to endorse City involvement in the education of children and youth. Commissioner Donovan asked pointedly whether each speaker should be addressed or whether the Commissioner were to wait until all the speakers were done. The Mayor suggested thereafter that they wait until the end. I did not stay but there was not a single report of a meaningful response to any suggestion the Mayor or any Commissioner, for example, to a 32-hour work week and a comparable reduction in pay for staff, or to consolidation of County and City policies.

What was reported was Mayor Lowe's snide "Have a nice day" to an audience member who said he was leaving because applause was forbidden. Further showing the City's hand was Commissioner Donovan's attitude at another meeting to a heckler: "Shut up or leave."

And according to the last reports, staff already is spending time to figure out what else the City can do to keep the public quiet, except when spoken to by one of the Burgomeisters.

But let's get back to money talk.

What I have learned about three or four vacancies including one for an assistant City Attorney position which may pay \$78,802.00, to \$118,203 annually. A Labor Relations Specialist and a CRA Financial Manager each may be hired at anywhere from \$58,795.00, to \$85,253.00. If we got the top of the line, the City may be paying out more than \$300,000 just to fill those positions. How long have they been vacant? This week there is another questionable opening for a CRA Manager at the latter salary range.

An information technology position closed last week. Together with the foregoing, the City may be spending more than \$400,000 for just these four new employees. Exactly how much is being spent for each slot should become clear to me, and thus to the public, once I am given the data I requested.

But it is the Attorney staff which concerns me. Please let me know how much each of the slots is being paid. If any of you are interested in comparable costs, consider the proposed hiring a new attorney by the prestigious local law firm of Dell Graham. That private attorney's office may not be able to compete against the City's generous offer to a new assistant.

To be clear, with regard to the Public Records Act request, I would like to know also how much the City Attorney's office relied on outside counsel and what the cost up front was to us taxpayers. Also, how much is being collected and from whom for allegedly frivolous suits filed against Gainesville?

When I was filing suits, City Attorney Radson regularly was handing out local work to a Tampa law firm. Tens of thousands of dollars were involved. In the Bussing era, City Attorney Radson could turn the outside counsel loose among local judges to try to recover fees from those who audaciously sued the City. Apparently that practice slowed under Mayor Hanrahan. Now I fear its return as Attorney Radson who has been in office since 1985 returns to full power.