

Mr. Batsel,

I'm reaching out to you with concerns regarding the City of Crystal River. At present, I hold multiple job titles with the city including Deputy Clerk, Executive Assistant to the City Manager (Mr. Doug Baber), Executive Assistant to the Assistant City Manager (Mr. Michael Manning), and liaison to the City Council. As part of my job, I am required to attend all director's meetings and frequently work to coordinate and carry out duties as assigned by the City Manager, Mr. Doug Baber. Multiple actions taken by Mr. Baber have begun to raise red flags, and cause concern.

It is important to note that the culture of the City of Crystal River has changed dramatically since Mr. Baber has become City Manager. It is common during director's meetings for Mr. Baber to state things like "The bus is going to pick up speed and if you cannot handle it get off now so we can find someone who can" and words to similar effect. As a result everything directed by Mr. Baber carries the unspoken potential of career loss should his direction not be followed. Multiple directors have confided in me that they are thinking about resigning and have described the atmosphere as bullying, harassing, and stressful, and I agree.

The first red flag was in regards to a recent bid opening for emergency disaster services. Mr. Baber and Mr. Manning stated that the bid process itself was only "a formality" and was going to be awarded to a specific company, Atkins Realis. Upon selecting the bid scoring committee and presenting it to Mr. Baber, he directed that it was a requirement that Mr. Manning be on the panel. I amended the panel to include Mr. Manning at the direction of Mr. Baber.

After the panel had completed their bid scoring sheets, I tabulated the results and entered them onto the totals sheet. Atkins Realis was not the best scoring company. When speaking with Mr. Manning about the bid scoring, I mentioned this and he immediately told me that Atkins Realis needed to be awarded the bid. He told me to give him back his scoring sheet, and he rescored it to ensure that Atkins Realis was the company that would be selected.

With the culture of threatening termination, I did as I was directed. However, I am concerned that the manner this bid was conducted seems odd. It was later addressed at City Council meetings, and to my knowledge it has been a larger issue that the bid was not public in the way it should have been. The lack of public scoring, coupled with the amending of scores makes me feel like something is amiss.

The second major red flag occurred afterwards. During a director's meeting Mr. Baber stated that all employees need to be careful what they say to City Council members, as it could make them look bad as an employee. Obviously this was another veiled threat that Mr. Baber could terminate an employee if they were to speak to council about anything that concerned them. Shortly after that director's meeting, I received an email from Mr. Baber telling me that anytime I need to email a member of the City Council or yourself as the City Attorney, I must CC him on the correspondence.

Another red flag is that Mr. Baber has access to the email inbox of every City of Crystal River employee. I'm not certain that everyone is even aware of this. During a director's meeting Mr. Baber mentioned that the city's cloud storage was becoming full. Under the guise of dealing with this issue, he gained general information about employees' inbox numbers. This did not satisfy him so he told the city's IT department to give him access to employee inboxes to verify read vs. unread emails. During the director's meeting he began to state how many emails were in various director's inboxes.

Ultimately this creates an environment where it seems Mr. Baber (and by extension Mr. Manning, who has no meetings independent of Mr. Baber) takes actions that are questionable, is monitoring everyone's correspondence, attempts to control information flow to the City Council, and implies that anyone who speaks up will be terminated. I am concerned that our city may be impacted by improper actions or by a significant number of resignations as a result of the culture created by Mr. Baber. I am concerned about even writing this letter.

Thank you for your time,

Sabrinna R. Utter