

Good evening,

I hope everyone is doing well! I am writing everyone tonight to address some concerns that I have regarding the Haynsworth, Sinkler, Boyd (herein after HSB) investigation. I have heard several different stories regarding a written report that may or may not have been submitted to the County by HSB. More specifically, I have heard three different stories: 1) there is no written report that has been generated by HSB, 2) there is a report that has been submitted and staff is working through it right now with our legal department, and 3) there is a report that has been submitted to the county legal department that is being redacted with the intent of having the redacted report circulated to council. If there is in fact a written report that has been generated by HSB, then I believe it is imperative that we, as council, received the written report. I understand that it would need to be submitted via executive session given the fact that it will most likely contain specific employee information which should remain confidential but nonetheless, we should have access to it without redactions or modifications. HSB was hired by us, the Council, and as such they have a fiduciary responsibility to us as their client. We are entitled to review any reports generated by them without redactions or modifications.

I also have some general concerns about the findings presented at the County Council meeting this past Monday on March 25, 2024. My first concern is that HSB only made specific references to the major issues that were already publicly known (e.g. the weighted blankets, playground equipment, and the contract awarded to the consulting firm). While I truly hope that those were the only major issues they actually found, I personally find it hard to believe. The HSB statement says that there was "an overall culture of laxity" which ultimately resulted "in flagrant violations of the Procurement Code" and "failures to follow technical details of the Code". My second major concern is that it does not appear that HSB utilized independent IT to review our systems in order to verify that the information submitted to HSB was accurate. Admittedly, IT and computers in general are not my areas of expertise but this is something that I had grave concerns about at the start of this process. My concerns were sufficient enough for me to request a meeting with the Sheriff to share with him the information that was brought to my attention. If our investigation did not address these concerns then I do not have full faith in their findings. This is yet another reason a review of the report, if any, is of the utmost importance to me.

I know that we would all like to put this chapter behind us and move forward with a clean slate but I cannot shake the feeling that we are being kept in the dark whether it be intentional or unintentional. This has been a troubling time for the County to say the least and we owe it to our constituents to make sure that our local government is complying with the law. I also know that the overwhelming majority of our staff in this county are absolutely amazing people and we also owe it to them to make sure that they have a healthy work environment. I want to have faith in the investigation that was conducted by HSB but without a full report I will remain skeptical of their findings. I personally never liked the fact that we utilized a law firm to conduct the investigation in the first place but I also understood the rationale for it. Part of the reason I did not object to hiring a law firm was that I was under the impression that we would have periodic updates from HSB that were to be made to the public at the Finance Committee meetings but this did not happen. Furthermore, I believe that we owe it to the people of this County to waive the attorney-client privilege and make any written report publicly available (with any necessary redactions of course). A large portion of our population has lost confidence in the government at every level and I believe that ultimately making any written report available to the public will help restore some level of trust with the people that put their faith in us to represent them.

I hope that someone can shed some light on the situation and provide accurate information regarding the availability or status of the report from HSB.

Sincerely,

David Bartholomew