

April 25, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

David M. D'Agostino, Esq.
GORHAM & GORHAM, INC.
25 Danielson Pike
P.O. Box 46
North Scituate, RI 02857
daviddagostino@gorhamlaw.com

Re: IAFF 3328/Town of East Greenwich: Misuse of Town E-mail List

Dear Solicitor D'Agostino:

This afternoon, Town Manager Gayle Corrigan sent a message to Town residents from the Town's e-mail address attacking and disparaging a Town employee. Corrigan asserts that Lt. William Perry, Local 3327 [sic] Union President made "false and misleading" remarks. She asserts "[w]e are not looking to pick a fight with Lt. Perry" and "we have highlighted" portions of the transcript of Lt. Perry's public comment and "interspersed in brackets, the accurate information to correct/clarify the record." It is not clear who Corrigan is referring to when she uses the pronoun "we," but the implication is that she speaks for the Town. As both the attorney for Local 3328 and a Town resident, I am concerned that Corrigan is giving Town residents the impression that she speaks on behalf of the Town. Does she? Did the Town Council authorize Corrigan to send today's e-mail? Further, every time Corrigan or Town Council President Cienki sends an e-mail disparaging current and former Town employees, or residents (such as myself), she puts the Town at risk for litigation. I believe it incumbent upon you, as Town Solicitor, as well as the Town Council as a body, to ensure the Town Manager and Council President do not use the Town's e-mail service as propaganda against Town employees and other residents with whom they disagree.

As Corrigan herself stated in her letter to the residents, "[a]nyone speaking with authority should be accurate with their information." Corrigan's letter is not only inaccurate, the tone of her comments are inflammatory and childish. For example, her comments that the union has not been cooperative in scheduling "ministerial" grievance meetings is untrue. As you and I both know, Lt. Perry e-mails Corrigan several times a week attempting to obtain responses from her on pending grievances and to set up times to meet. Because Corrigan must coordinate with you, as well as Tim Cavazza, the Town was unable to meet with the Union on the date it offered for the last grievance meeting. Then Corrigan apparently went on vacation and was unavailable for two weeks. Notwithstanding the Town's contractual duty to meet with the Union to discuss pending grievances, it appears Corrigan has already made up her mind about a least one pending grievance. She writes on page two of the altered transcript that "a 30-day suspension

[was] given to a firefighter for falsifying documents before the court.” As you know, the Union has contested that suspension and the grievance is pending. Corrigan’s citation to the pending grievance is a transparent attempt to place the firefighters in a negative light. Corrigan then disparages Lt. Perry by claiming he “clearly does not have a good handle on actual numbers.” She then discloses Lt. Perry’s address and the value of his property, claiming the current tax bill for his property is \$11,841.83. On the contrary, including the taxes on the four vehicles owned by the Perry family and other utility taxes, the family pays approximately \$15,000 a year in taxes. But, even if the Perry family only paid \$1 in taxes, his concerns about the apparent indifference of the Town Council as to the Town’s outstanding legal bills are valid and shared by many residents.

But Corrigan doesn’t stop there. She disparages Lt. Perry again with respect to a building fire that he helped to suppress on Monday, April 23, 2018, asserting “again, Mr. Perry does not have a good handle on actual numbers.” Lt. Perry said during public comment that his was the first truck on scene and that there were two firefighters on scene. He is correct. Chief Kevin Robinson does not drive a fire truck and is not a firefighter. Corrigan’s comments that the Union President and Lieutenant of the Fire Department “does not have a good handle on actual numbers” are defamatory. The remainder of Corrigan’s comments regarding a building fire that she did not observe are uninformed and inaccurate.

Finally, and perhaps most disturbing, is Corrigan’s comments that the East Greenwich firefighters refuse “to be called back into work when there is an active fire.” Based on my discussions with the firefighters and knowledge of the Fire Department, this is untrue. I see no other reason for Corrigan’s unsupported statement than to, once again, attempt to disparage the firefighters. Shortly after sending out the propaganda e-mail to Town residents, Corrigan requests a meeting with the Union to discuss pending grievances. Does Corrigan truly believe that her behavior is conducive to positive labor-management relations? As Town Solicitor, do you believe that it is appropriate for Corrigan to use the Town e-mail system to send misleading and derogatory e-mails about a resident and first-responder that took the time and energy to address his concerns to the Town Council? Does the Town Council? I believe that Corrigan’s letter will only serve to dissuade residents and other interested parties from speaking during public comment, having a chilling effect on public comment. Is this the Town Council’s goal? To suppress speech that it disagrees with? If not, I expect the Town Council to take steps to remedy the misuse of the Town’s e-mail system and prevent its misuse in the future.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Elizabeth Wiens

cc: Lt. William Perry, Union President