

February 10, 2009

CITY OF ANN ARBOR  
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TO: Mayor Heiftje  
Ann Arbor City Council Members

2009 FEB 18 PM 4: 53

I have some concerns with the Field Operations Division of the City of Ann Arbor and the people who supervise those departments.

First, I would like to address the Dennison Survey that was conducted; how much did it cost and what were the results of that survey? As a taxpayer paying for this nonsense, I'd really like to know. And what did it prove or show; that morale of city employees is poor? No kidding. I would not have charged you one cent to tell you why and so I will.

About four years ago the city hired a department head (who was not a city resident nor promoted within the city itself), and whose qualifications are suspect. I'm curious as to how much money did the City save by hiring Ms. Henderson to head this division which she knew and knows not too much about? Tell me, please, how much money did the City save or spend to hire a personal coach to help Ms. Henderson "manage" these departments?

When she came to dictate (and I'll get to that), she had no knowledge of the equipment used, what it was used for, how it worked and if there are specific requirements, qualifications, or safety standards to operate such equipment. Her words were "when's that thingamajig going to get here", and the "whatchamacallit", and a majority of the employees still don't think she knows which way is up or down on most of the equipment they themselves operate.

Ms. Henderson's style of management is, to say the least, discriminative, punitive, harassing, intimidating, and out-and-out a violation of the labor relations contract. For one example, it is no secret to the Field Operations Division that the Utilities night shift that was "mandated" was created to punish employees who did not work enough "call-outs" to Ms. Henderson's liking; which most likely happened because an on-call foreman was perhaps exhausted by having to do his job and call through the seniority list to get people to work. I'm pretty sure they get paid to do their job but perhaps someone is getting a bit tired or lazy. Comments have been made to the employees by both Ms. Henderson and some of the foremen that they better do such-and-such or, "I'll create you a shift". Yes, this was specifically said to an employee.

First of all, there is a contract in place between the City and its Employees about creating a shift, posting a shift, and going through a seniority list, or some other democratic way of having people work this assignment. I believe that labor relations laws were created to avoid this very type of retaliation against employees that management may not like. As a matter of fact, other departments within Field Operations rotate their employees on an evening shift to be fair and impartial toward all employees in that department. Okay, so why didn't it happen here?

People are shifted from department to department on a whim, without notice, without proper training, without a reason other than "they can". Aside from the liability of improper training and being thrown to the wolves, so to speak, I have a real concern about the safety of my fellow employees and the public, not to mention blatant violations of OSHA standards, and blatant disregard for the union contract. Well, gee, it doesn't take a rocket scientist or hundreds of thousands of dollars to figure out why employee morale is so negative.

And so the grievance process begins. There is no end in sight to that since they are dealing with Ms. Henderson who does as she pleases, and what has me so furious is that the City is allowing this dictatorial, discriminative, and punitive style of management to exist. Shame on you!

There is much more to say but I think you get the picture. I am appalled that the City and Union have not sat at the table to resolve these issues of shift assignment for punishment purposes, moving people from department to department for punishment purposes, etc., which is clearly a violation of the intent of the Union Contract as agreed by the city and its employees.

Perhaps if you take a good hard look at Ms. Henderson's management style and performance and sent her on her way, perhaps the city could save a few dollars, avoid potential lawsuits, improve morale, and serve the public in a safe and effective manner; and that should be the city's first priority, the safety of its employees and the public.

Respectfully,



Laurie Nonnenmacher

Resident, and spouse of a city employee