



CITY OF HALLOWELL

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George D. Lapointe, Mayor

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October 18, 2023

Gary Lamb
19 South Chestnut Street
Augusta, Maine 04330

Re: Letter of Instruction

Dear Gary,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Hallowell City Council to express the Council's concerns about the tone and message of an email that you sent in response to a public safety issue raised by a Hallowell community member, and to provide you with the Council's expectations about the tone and content of your communications as City Manager going forward.

As you know, in early June, a Hallowell community member representing a local organization sent you an email raising serious questions about the lack of public safety officers present to assist with traffic control and parade management at this year's Hallowell Pride parade, and noting that this had not been the case with other parades. Instead of notifying the Council about the concerns, or seeking guidance about how best to respond to the public safety concerns in a thoughtful manner, you sent a poorly worded email response that contained misleading and irrelevant information, and that ultimately came across as inflammatory and defensive. As a result of statements you made in your email, another community member expressed concerns during public comment at a subsequent City Council meeting about possible discrimination. Indeed, it was not until after that meeting, days after you received the first complaint email, that you ultimately shared it and your response with the Council. By that time, however, the damage had been done.

To be clear - your June 8, 2023 email response was unprofessional in the following ways. First, your statements that "[f]ire department members have their own opinions" and that "[d]ifferent citizens have different opinions about how they approach LGBTQ issues" were inappropriate. The implication was that somehow the City's obligation to provide public safety services to all of its citizens changes depending on who they are, or who is providing the public safety services. This is just wrong, and dangerous. Insinuating in any way that citizens' entitlement to adequate public safety is somehow subject to someone's "opinion" is unacceptable. Everyone in our community is entitled to know that our public safety officers will always be there for them whenever needed, and your email implied otherwise. Second, when responding on behalf of the City to community member/organization concerns about public safety or any other issues, alluding to your own opinions or referring to unrelated/irrelevant issues (such as rainbow crosswalks) is unnecessary and comes across as defensive. In this instance, your response should have been limited to acknowledging the complaint and letting the community member know that

you would look into the concerns and get back to them. You should then have immediately notified the Council of the complaint.

Going forward, it is crucial that your communications on behalf of the City are respectful, clear, accurate, and not defensive - regardless of the recipient. They also need to be well thought out and responsive to the specific concern(s) raised or issue to be addressed. Before making any statements or sending any correspondence as City Manager, you need to fully understand the purpose of your communication, the desired outcome, and be confident that your communication will effectuate that purpose.

In order to assist you with this, for the next 90 days, you must adhere to the following procedure when receiving and acknowledging any complaint issue from the community: (1) within five business days (or sooner if possible), acknowledge receipt of the concern in writing, (2) inform the complainant that the issue being raised is of importance to the City and that you are forwarding the concern to the Mayor/Council President for their review, and (3) let them know that you will be back in touch with them as soon as possible. You should then promptly forward the complaint to the Mayor and Council President for discussion of an appropriate response and any potential next steps. We will reassess this process after 90 days.

Gary, as you know, this is not the first time that the council has raised with you concerns relating to your communications as City Manager. Our hope is that going forward, we will see significant improvement in your communication style. Please understand, however, that if similar issues continue to arise, the council may need to take further action.

Sincerely,



George D. Lapointe
Mayor, City of Hallowell

Cc: Personnel File