



AGENDA

SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING

6:00 PM - Thursday, August 17, 2023

Commission Chambers

Page

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. ROLL CALL
4. PUBLIC COMMENTS RELATED TO AGENDA ITEMS / GOOD & WELFARE
5. PRESENTATIONS

- 5.1. Investigation of Commissioner Jacobs - Attorney Haddad

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[Commissioner Jacobs Investigation Report](#)

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 6.1. Back to School Giveaway, Saturday, August 19 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at Town Hall
Workshop Commission Meeting, Tuesday, August 23 at 6:00 PM

7. ADJOURNMENT

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF F.S. SECTION 286.0105, IF A PERSON DECIDES TO APPEAL ANY DECISION MADE BY THE BOARD, AGENCY, OR COMMISSION WITH RESPECT TO ANY MATTER CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING OR HEARING, HE OR SHE WILL NEED A RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS, AND, FOR SUCH PURPOSE, HE OR SHE MAY NEED TO ENSURE THAT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS IS MADE, WHICH RECORD INCLUDES THE TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE UPON WHICH THE APPEAL IS TO BE BASED.

ANY PERSON REQUIRING AUXILIARY AIDS AND SERVICES AT THIS MEETING MAY CALL THE TOWN CLERKS OFFICE AT 954-966-4600 AT LEAST TWO CALENDAR DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING. IF YOU ARE HEARING OR SPEECH IMPAIRED PLEASE CONTACT THE FLORIDA RELAY SERVICES BY USING THE FOLLOWING NUMBERS: 1-800-955-8770 (VOICE) OR 1-800-955-8771 (TDD)

DECORUM - ALL COMMENTS MUST BE ADDRESSED TO THE COMMISSION AS A BODY AND NOT TO INDIVIDUALS. ANY PERSON MAKING IMPERTINENT OR SLANDEROUS REMARKS, OR WHO BECOMES BOISTEROUS WHILE ADDRESSING THE COMMISSION, SHALL BE BARRED FROM FURTHER AUDIENCE BEFORE THE COMMISSION BY THE PRESIDING OFFICER, UNLESS PERMISSION TO CONTINUE OR AGAIN ADDRESS THE COMMISSION IS GRANTED BY THE MAJORITY VOTE OF THE COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT. NO CLAPPING, APPLAUDING, HECKLING OR VERBAL OUTBURSTS IN SUPPORT OR IN OPPOSITION TO A SPEAKER OR HIS/HER REMARKS SHALL BE PERMITTED. NO SIGNS OR PLACARDS SHALL BE ALLOWED IN THE COMMISSION CHAMBERS. PLEASE MUTE OR TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE OR PAGER AT THE START OF THE MEETING. FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN BEING BARRED FROM THE MEETING. PERSONS EXITING THE CHAMBER SHALL DO SO QUIETLY.

Marlen D. Martell
Town Clerk



TONJA HADDAD P.A.

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August 1, 2023

Via Electronic Mail

Mr. J.C. Jimenez, Town Manager
Town of Pembroke Park
3150 SW 52 Avenue
Pembroke Park, FL 33023
hr@tppfl.gov

Dear Mr. Jimenez:

As you are aware, I was retained by the Town of Pembroke Park to conduct an independent investigation surrounding allegations made against Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs involving accusations of hostile work environment and potential violations of the Town's Code of Ethics and Conduct.

Following all Town Investigation Procedures, I gathered and reviewed records and interviewed witnesses. The document provided herewith details my investigation and contains my factual findings.

Please feel free to contact me if any further explanation or discussion is warranted.

Very truly yours,
LAW OFFICE OF TONJA HADDAD, PA

/s/ Tonja Haddad Coleman

For the firm

w/encls.
THC

tonja@tonjahaddad.com

TOWN OF PEMBROKE PARK
INVESTIGATION REGARDING COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY JACOBS

INTRODUCTION

I was retained after a majority of the Town of Pembroke Park's (the Town) Commissioners voted to initiate an independent investigation into Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs for allegedly creating a hostile work environment and engaging in other behaviors that may violate the Town's Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct as delineated in Resolution No. 2020-090. This investigation was conducted in accordance with the Town's Investigation Procedures, as approved on March 8, 2023.

I reviewed all documents provided and commenced interviewing witnesses on June 26, 2023. The interviews concluded on July 18, 2023. I thereafter viewed several of the Town's commission meetings and workshops. Despite the invitations, as explained below, Commissioner Jacobs declined to be interviewed, provide any names of witnesses with whom he wished me to speak, or send any documentation he wished for me to review.

TOWN GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

1. **Employee Handbook:** The Town codified its obligation to protect individuals from discrimination, harassment, and other workplace behaviors in its Employee Handbook,¹ which provides that it "shall not discriminate against any employee or job applicant and prohibits discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, sexual gender identity, age, religion, national origin, marital or veteran status, height, weight, disability, political affiliation, or other protected classes." *See Town of Pembroke Park Employee Handbook – December 2021 (Handbook)*, p. 3.

The Handbook explicitly addresses workplace harassment and provides that "Harassment is a form of employment discrimination . . . Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex-gender (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information. Harassment becomes unlawful where: A) Enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or B) The conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive." *Handbook*, pp. 4-5. It further expounds upon Harassment, and provides: "To be unlawful, the conduct must create a work environment that would be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people. Offensive conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, isolation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, and interference with work performance." *Handbook*, p. 5.

It likewise addresses workplace bullying and explains that:

¹ In this instance the alleged perpetrator is an elected official, not a Town employee; but the Town has a duty to its employees. *See Bruno v. Monroe County*, 383 Fed. Appx. 845 (11th Cir. 2010).

The Town will not in any instance tolerate bullying behavior. Employees found in violation of this policy will be disciplined, up to and including termination. Bullying is defined as repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more people by one or more perpetrators. Such conduct includes:

- Threatening, humiliating, or intimidating behaviors.
- Work interference/sabotage that prevents work from being done.
- Verbal abuse.

Such behaviors violate the Town's Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct, as all employees will be treated equally with dignity and respect. The Town considers the following types of behavior examples of bullying:

- Verbal bullying: slandering, ridiculing, or maligning a person or his or her family; persistent name calling that is hurtful, insulting, or humiliating; using a person as the butt of jokes; abusive and offensive remarks.

In addition, the following examples may constitute or contribute to evidence of bullying in the workplace:

- Persistent singling out of one person.
- Shouting or raising one's voice at an individual in public or in private.
- Using obscene or intimidating gestures.
- Not allowing the person to speak or express himself or herself (i.e., ignoring or interrupting).
- Personal insults and use of offensive nicknames.
- Public humiliation in any form.
- Constant criticism on matters unrelated or minimally related to the person's job performance or description.
- Public reprimands.
- Repeatedly accusing someone of errors that cannot be documented.

Handbook, pp. 5-6. See also *Sexual Harassment Policy and Workplace abuse policies*, pp. 7, 9.

The Handbook additionally contains a social media and blogging provision and guides those who have social media or who opt to comment on posts about official Town business, which provides, in relevant part:

- The use of ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage [sic] in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the Town's workplace is strictly prohibited. Proper consideration for the privacy of others and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory (like religion or politics) should be exercised.
- Personal grievances and/or comments that compromise or disrupt the efficient operation of the Administration or represent the Town in a negative light are discouraged.

Handbook, pp. 66-67.

2. **Resolution No. 2020-090:** On December 9, 2020, the Town passed and adopted "A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COMMISSION OF THE TOWN OF PEMBROKE PARK, FLORIDA, ADOPTING A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ELECTED AND APPOINTED

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TOWN OFFICIALS; SUPERSEDING CONFLICTING RESOLUTIONS AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.” See *Resolution No. 2020-090 (Resolution)*. The purpose of this Code of Conduct,² which is applicable to the Town’s elected and appointed officials, is “to describe the manner in which elected and appointed officials should treat one another, Town staff, constituents and others they come in contact with while representing the Town of Pembroke Park.” *Resolution*, p. 1. It provides, in relevant part:

1. Elected and Appointed Officials’ Conduct with Each Other in Public Meetings.

(b) Practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate. Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of debate by a free democracy in action. Free debate does not justify nor permit, however, public officials to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments about other officials, Town staff or members of the public.

(c) Avoid personal comments that could offend other members. If a member is personally offended by the remarks of another member, the offended member should make notes of the actual words used and call for a “point of personal privilege” that challenges the other member to justify or apologize for the language used. The chair will maintain control and order during this discussion.

(d) Demonstrate effective problem solving approaches. Members have a public stage and have the responsibility to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole.

Resolution, pp. 1-2.

3. Elected and Appointed Officials’ Conduct with Town Staff. Governance of the Town relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials, appointed officials and Town staff. Therefore, every effort should be made to be cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by each individual for the good of the community.

(a) Treat all Town staff as professionals. Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual is expected. Poor behavior towards Town staff or appointed officials is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

(b) Do not disrupt Town staff from their jobs. Under a commission form of government, elected officials acting in their official capacity, will interact with staff. However, elected and appointed officials should not direct staff, nor should they interrupt staff while they are in meetings, on the phone, or engrossed in performing their job functions in order to meet the official’s individual needs. Elected and

² The following is delineated with respect to Conduct towards the Public: “(c) Practice active listening. It is disconcerting to speakers to have members who appear to be uninterested in a speaker’s presentation when they are speaking. It is acceptable to review documents or to make notes, but reading for a long period of time or gazing around the room gives the appearance of disinterest. Members shall try to be conscious of facial expressions, and avoid those expressions that could be interpreted as “smirking,” disbelief, anger or boredom.” *Resolution*, p. 3. There are members of the Public present at every meeting.

appointed officials should not attend Town staff meetings unless requested by staff. Even when the elected or appointed official does not say anything at a staff meeting, his or her presence implies support, shows partiality, may intimidate staff, and hampers staff's ability to do their job objectively.

(c) Never publicly criticize an individual employee. Elected and appointed Town officials should never express concerns about the performance of a Town employee in public, to the employee directly, or to the employee's supervisor. Comments about staff performance should only be made to the Town Manager through private correspondence or conversation.

(d) Do not get involved in administrative functions.

Resolution, p. 4.

3. **Town of Pembroke Park Investigation Procedures:** In March 2023, the Town Commission approved its investigation procedures, which provide that "[i]f a complaint is made about the Town Manager, Town Attorney, Human Resources Director, or Town Commission, the Town will obtain an outside investigator to investigate the complaint." *Investigation Procedures*, p. 1. The document provides that:

The Town of Pembroke Park strives to create and maintain a work environment in which people are treated with dignity, decency, and respect. The Town seeks to create an environment characterized by mutual trust and the absence of intimidation. The Town of Pembroke Park will not tolerate unlawful discrimination or harassment of any kind. Through enforcement of this policy and through education of employees, The Town of Pembroke Park seeks to prevent, correct, and discipline behavior that violates any Town, State, or Federal policy, procedure, rule, or regulation.

Investigation Procedures, p. 1. The Procedure further details its non-retaliation and confidentiality policy and the process by which investigations are conducted. This investigation was conducted in accordance with the processes delineated therein.

INTERVIEWS AND PROCEDURE

On June 1, 2023, I received the above-referenced documents and a list of seventeen (17) names from the Director of Human Resources (HR). The list included current and former Town employees and officials. After reviewing the germane policies and documents, I called or sent an electronic correspondence to each person on the list on June 8 and June 9, requesting availability times to commence interviews the week of June 26, 2023. Each person was informed of my role and the subject of the investigation ("I was retained by the Town of Pembroke Park to conduct an independent investigation surrounding contentions against Commissioner Jacobs involving allegations of a hostile work environment and potential violations of the code of conduct."), that the investigation process would be conducted as per the Town's Investigation Procedures, and that the meetings would be held in person at my office or via Zoom where needed. Of the seventeen (17) names provided, I was able to interview thirteen (13) witnesses; three (3) interviews were conducted via Zoom, while the remaining ten (10) took place in person. One witness had an

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attorney present. I contacted other people whose names were provided through witnesses, but nobody wished to be interviewed. Commissioner Jacobs was contacted through counsel on June 9, 2023, June 16, 2023, July 18, 2023, and again on July 31, 2023 to request his participation and inquire if he had any witnesses with whom he would like me to speak. He declined. On July 31, 2023 a civilian/business owner from the Town of Pembroke Park contacted my office to provide information.

The scheduled interviews commenced on June 26, 2023 and were concluded on July 18, 2023. They were conducted in no particular order; rather, they were scheduled at the convenience of the witnesses. At the commencement of each interview, the witness was read the relevant portions of the Town's Investigation Procedures and Resolution No. 2020-090, informed of the allegations about which they would be speaking, and encouraged to speak unreservedly in the narrative regarding the issues at hand. At the conclusion of each interview, I asked if the person knew of anyone else with whom I should speak. Some provided names; some did not. Additionally, many witnesses brought supporting documents with them and left them for me to review.

FACTUAL FINDINGS

The interviews conducted with the thirteen (13) witnesses, coupled with the documentary and video evidence provided, which included Commissioner Jacobs' electronic correspondence, behavior on the dais, and social media, revealed a consistent narrative regarding Commissioner Jacobs' conduct. As demonstrated more fully below, there is a prevalent fear of Commissioner Jacobs (Jacobs) and his behavior, creating what the employees and his colleagues have described as a hostile, volatile, toxic workplace. Specific examples include, but are not limited to, the following: foul and inappropriate language; racial and ethnic slurs; antisemitic, chauvinistic, homophobic, misogynistic, demeaning, and degrading comments;³ bullying; threatening harm; abuse/misuse of power; and retaliation by way of intimidation and attack against anyone who disagrees with him, including public humiliation and the threat of termination.⁴ Virtually every person interviewed who works for (or did work for) the Town and filed complaints with the Town expressed frustration that nothing was, or could be, done regarding Jacobs' behavior. At least three (3) witnesses confirmed that they had, or planned to, file complaints with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or other government agencies.

Commissioner Jacobs declined to participate. Commissioner Jacobs was elected in 2019 and was reelected (unopposed) in March 2023. He previously served as the mayor (until April 2023) and is currently a commissioner. He also previously served as the liaison to the newly formed Pembroke Park Police Department which, according to all who were interviewed, was the focus of his tenure. Jacobs is a former law enforcement officer.⁵

³ Commissioner Jacobs claims, both in his social media and at commission meetings, that he has First Amendment rights that justify and protect his commentary and behavior. However, certain anti-discrimination and harassment laws have been deemed as constitutionally valid restrictions on speech.

⁴ The intimidation and attacks have occurred as follows: verbally at commission meetings; on social media; in the form of formal complaints Jacobs has filed with the OIG, the Public Corruption Unit, or FDLE; and by placing employees on the agenda for termination.

⁵ Arizona State Records show that Jacobs' certification was revoked (Case 2009-101) on April 21, 2010 for Criminal Offenses- Theft/Fraud.

Several witnesses testified that while he was mayor, Jacobs displayed a framed newspaper article in his office that highlighted his termination and decertification as a police officer. The article from the Phoenix New Times unraveled that Jacobs was at the center of a notorious scandal that included stories of rough sex, allegations of sexual abuse, nude photos and videos taken without consent, and physical abuse of a girlfriend. The New Times also reported that Jacobs had submitted a false obituary about his ex-girlfriend to an airline in order to transfer her nonrefundable airline ticket to his new girlfriend, and that he had used a police airplane (he is a pilot) to stalk an ex-girlfriend. Jacobs unsuccessfully sued in federal court over the allegations and the investigation. While these accusations originate from a former workplace and are not the subject of this investigation, displaying these public and salacious accusations of his treatment of women and alleged dishonesty and misuse of work equipment, and sharing them with everyone with whom he works, is imprudent.

First, the allegations regarding female employees and colleagues will be addressed:

Much of the testimony from witnesses included Commissioner Jacobs' behavior pertaining to the former Town Attorney, **Melissa Anderson** (Anderson). According to the Town Clerk Marlen Martell, who provided proof in the form of text messages Jacobs sent to her, Commissioner Jacobs continually referred to Anderson as a "f---ing c---," the "c--- lawyer," and a "c---." According to Anderson herself, Jacobs also repeatedly called her nasty, told her to shut up, to "stay the f--- away from him," and to "f--- off." After unsuccessfully trying to terminate her, Commissioner Jacobs sent Anderson, who is openly gay, a TikTok video which appeared to all who viewed it, including Anderson and the Town Manager, to be homophobic, misogynistic, and threatening (it features a masculine lesbian asking a bouncer what makes him angry about masculine women and his response is about his ability to beat them up). Jacobs sent this video to Anderson on October 1, 2022, and at the same time also sent a copy of it to the Town Manager, J.C. Jimenez, with the caption "this is your town attorney. She has seen it." This video placed Anderson in fear, and she reported it to the Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO). At the October 15, 2022 commission meeting, Jacobs was encouraged to apologize to Anderson, but Jacobs said he would do so "when hell freezes over," and then accused her of harassing four men in the Town. Jacobs also referred to Melissa Anderson as a "c---" to the Town Manager and the IT Director, Mark Pakula, and further told them Anderson was a Pit Bull and should be "put down." She was transitioned out as Town Attorney in November 2022. In the June 14, 2023 Commission Meeting, Jacobs alleges that he accidentally sent this TikTok to Anderson (approximately 1:56 into the meeting video). He has also defended himself from the homophobic allegation by asserting that he works with a "great deal of gay flight attendants."

Anderson confirmed what was stated above and further espoused that her issues with Jacobs commenced over his desire to start "his" own police department. She explained that "[a]nyone who got in his way of creating a police department on town staff got run over by Jacobs." This sentiment was echoed by everyone with whom I spoke. Anderson said she discovered through the proposed police department documents that there would be a gap in police coverage for the Town. At the commission meeting where this was discussed, Jacobs told her to "sit down and shut up." She addressed this concern, as well as Jacobs' behavior towards her, with the former HR Director, Yolanda Menegazzo. However, Menegazzo submitted her resignation shortly after the

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meeting, telling Jacobs at a public meeting that he was creating a toxic work environment. Anderson further explained that at the August 2022 meeting, when Jacobs was seeking to have her fired, he called Anderson “nasty” and accused her of “weaponizing” her gender. After the meeting, Anderson sought Jacobs out to try and smooth things over, to which he responded, “stay the f--- away from me.” She transitioned out of her job with the Town.

The Town Clerk, **Marlen Martell** (Martell), testified that she has both witnessed and been the victim of harassment, bullying, abuse, hostility, and retaliation at the hands of Jacobs. A review of the electronic mail and text messaging between Jacobs and Martell (which is extensive and compelling) reveals a pattern of harassing, abusive, condescending, and demeaning behavior exhibited by Jacobs and the use of threatening, offensive, and wholly inappropriate communication. For example, in writing to Martell, he refers to the two other male commissioners (Morrisette and Hodgkins) as idiots (or “the two idiots”), “incompetent pieces of s---,” “overpaid, non-working a--holes,” and disturbingly states that Commissioner Hodgkins “needs to die. I’m going to help with all the stress he is going to get from me.” He continually refers to the Town Attorney as a “c---,” and discusses his constant desire to have her put on the agenda to fire her.⁶ One of the text communications sent by Jacobs to Martell during a workshop meeting on May 25, 2022 when he was mayor, provides: “I f---ing hate people. Several in this room.” “Melissa is a c---. I need another water please.” Further, he told Martell to “get her head out of her a--,” yelled “f--- you” at her, called her a “rat,” told her you “hang a traitor for treason,” and threatened to have her fired when she disagreed with him or told him that she could not do some of the things he asked. Jacobs’ texts to the Town Clerk further revealed repeated self-aggrandizing statements, such as that the Town would be nothing without him, that the Town would fall apart without him, would still be a “s---hole” without him, was a “s---hole” before he arrived, and that that there is “nothing you can do to me I’m elected.”

Martell asserts that she has frequently complained to the Town Manager and HR about Jacobs’ behavior. Martell states that the retaliation against her is ongoing. On July 24, 2023, I was contacted and informed that on June 29, 2023, just days after she provided a statement and documents to me, Martell received a call from Florida Department of Law Enforcement Special Agent Michael McBride regarding a criminal investigation filed against her by Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs for Official Misconduct.

The Director of Human Resources, **Babette Friedman** (Friedman), explained that she has received several complaints from employees about Commissioner Jacobs “bashing” them, targeting them, and belittling them, both in his electric correspondences and verbally at commission meetings. In the last year and a half, HR has received six (6) formal complaints against Commissioner Jacobs. The Town Manager has received an additional two (2) formal complaints against Jacobs. Friedman also explained that employees come into her office crying over how Jacobs treats them. She stated that when she tried to address Commissioner Jacobs regarding his behavior, he threatened her job and repeatedly tried to have her terminated. According to Friedman,

⁶ Having people placed on the agenda to be terminated is a recurring theme throughout this investigation. Commissioner Jacobs asked for at least half a dozen employees to be put on the agenda to be terminated when they angered or disagreed with him. According to Mayor Mohammed, this never occurred prior to Commissioner Jacobs taking office.

he has filed a complaint against her with the Town Manager after each commission meeting that calls for her to be fired.

Friedman explained that after Jacobs refused to communicate with her about the complaints against him and his behavior towards staff, she reported the complaints and Jacobs' responses to the Town Manager. As a result, Town Manager Jimenez sent an electric correspondence to Jacobs on March 27, 2023. In that correspondence, the Town Manager explained, in a very professional manner, not only the behavior about which HR was receiving complaints, but also how it affected recruiting new employees and could result in the Town's liability for his actions. In response, Commissioner Jacobs called him "absolutely worthless as a town manager." Instead of addressing his own behavior, he espoused that his complaints against the Town Clerk and the Town Attorney were not being investigated.

Friedman testified that at the May 6, 2023 food drive, Jacobs called her a Nazi. Friedman is of Jewish descent and is a descendant of Holocaust survivors. This occurred in front of other employees and members of the public. Friedman reported this in writing to the Town Manager on Monday, May 8, 2023. At the June 14, 2023 commission meeting, Jacobs was censured for calling Friedman a Nazi. Friedman states that Jacobs responded directly to her from the dais, alleging that he did not recall using that word, but he "has another four-letter word" that would apply. This was confirmed in the video of the commission meeting. Based upon the other four-letter word ("c---") that he continually used to describe the Town Attorney, it was taken that he meant the same word applied to Friedman. Also, while being censured for his behavior at the June 14, 2023 meeting, Commissioner Jacobs popped popcorn, opened the bag, started making noises, and ate the popcorn while Friedman was reading the formal censure (see video of June 14, 2023 meeting, approximately 55:00). A photo of this appeared in the press. He then called Friedman a liar. Two days later, on June 16, 2023, Jacobs created a public Facebook post under his "Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs"⁷ account in which he called out two managerial employees of the Town (Friedman and Mark Pakula), posted their photos, and discussed the "lack of quality leadership" in the Town and the "toxic work environment" it was creating. Significantly, no complaints have ever been filed against any of these employees by anyone other than Jacobs.

Friedman stated that Commissioner Jacobs has verbally attacked and threatened six (6) female employees. There is extreme frustration because they cannot curb his actions or harassing, bullying behavior. She indicated that this, coupled with his repeated attacks on the job performance of certain Town employees in public meetings, makes a workplace free of harassment and hostility virtually unattainable. Employees are terrified to stand up for themselves or to disagree with Jacobs, as they do not want to be on the receiving end of his verbal abuse, have their jobs threatened, or be condemned on one of his social media posts. Friedman espoused that there is not one female in a position of authority with whom Jacobs can work. Every commissioner and employee interviewed agreed.

Former Town Clerk **Natasha Joseph** (Joseph), Former Assistant Public Services Director **Myriam Jacques** (Jacques), and current Chief Code Compliance Officer **Joseline Ramirez** (Ramierz) echoed these concerns, and similar concerns of her being singled out,

⁷ Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs's Public Facebook account will be addressed further.

demeaned, humiliated, belittled, and ridiculed publicly by Jacobs at the commission meetings. Both Jacques and Ramirez indicated that Jacobs accused them of not knowing what they were doing and stated that they did not belong in their jobs. Jacques finally resigned after Jacobs drafted a letter of termination and showed it to her, “just to let her know it existed,” and then put her on the commission agenda to be terminated and have her termination removed from the agenda, just to exert his power.

Jacques said that Jacobs’ presence made her uncomfortable and that he created a hostile and volatile workplace by encouraging employees to turn on each other and give him information/ammunition to use against other employees and commissioners. She further explained that he belittled the other commissioners if he did not get his way and would continually put items back on the agenda to try and bully others into agreeing with what he wanted.

Ramirez stated that after filing a sexual harassment complaint against a colleague with whom Jacobs was friends, Jacobs started going after her in meetings. She had seen him do it to employees who crossed him before; to embarrass the person, “bully them,” and ridicule them, and she said it was exactly what he did to her. He then openly refused to sign the Code Compliance Appreciation Week proclamation in June 2023. Ramirez further explained that Jacobs treated the HR Director (Friedman), the former Town Attorney (Anderson), the former Finance Director (Taubenfeld, discussed below), the former Executive Assistant (Steve Meza), the Town Manager (Jimenez), and the Town Clerk (Martell) even worse, and that Jacobs is immensely unprofessional in his treatment of employees from the dais. She said that Jacobs boasts about making people afraid of him. Ramirez further explained that it is the Town policy that employee performance issues are for the Town Manager to handle and discuss behind closed doors, but that Jacobs insists on handling them in public at commission meetings. She is in fear of Jacobs and worries about further retaliation from him.

Mayor Mohammed was on the commission from 2003 – 2020 and returned to the commission in 2023, at which time she assumed the role of mayor. She confirmed that even before her return, she witnessed and experienced what she deemed inappropriate behavior from Jacobs and his “good friend” who was hired as a consultant to examine the viability of a Town police department and then later became its Chief.⁸ This included being watched by the police, having her family’s tags run and people being questioned, and seeing Jacobs himself driving through her neighborhood in a Town of Pembroke Park police car. Mayor Mohammed stated that Jacobs referenced one female employee as a “black bitch,” falsely accused the former Town Clerk (also a black female) of being a drunk and repeated it again from the dais (see commission meeting video) and continued his attacks on the former Town Clerk on social media even after she was terminated (and cleared of any allegation of being drunk).

Likewise, the Mayor indicated that she has witnessed Jacobs bully approximately ten (10) employees of the Town, including attacking them at commission meetings and demanding that they be fired. Mayor Mohammed, who has the most institutional knowledge regarding the

⁸ The formation of the Town’s police department and hiring the consultant as the Chief was an integral part of what many believe started this decline in behavior from Jacobs, but most of the information provided is not germane to the allegations for which I was hired to investigate. As such, only relevant parts are addressed herein.

commission and makeup as someone involved in its politics for almost twenty (20) years, testified that before Jacobs, nobody on the commission had asked for anyone to get fired; it was not policy for the commission to be involved in that, as it was the responsibility of the Town Manager. She further indicated that when the Code Board came to a commission meeting and spoke out against Jacobs, he unilaterally dismantled the Board, and that he has filed five (5) complaints against her personally; one with the Ethics Commission and four with the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). He “brags” about these filings on his public “Commissioner” social media, posting photos of himself outside of the government offices and bashing his “corrupt” colleagues. Mayor Mohammed also reported that she was notified by friends at the Florida League of Cities that Jacobs was calling her an “unethical piece of s---” and said that she was going to jail. He likewise falsely told them, and people on the campaign trail, that Mayor Mohammed had three felonies on her record and that she stole USDA money. She also explained that Jacobs filed a lawsuit in Broward County Circuit Court against a resident, Mr. Mark Young (CACE21-010003), for discussing and posting about Jacobs’ former issues in Arizona, yet it is all public information that is contained in the article Jacobs framed and hung on his office wall.

Mayor Mohammed also reported that Jacobs stated at a Town food drive that George Floyd got what he deserved, and that he “cussed out” the Mayor’s mother at a food drive to the point that citizens were intervening. At a recent food drive, the food truck was late. Mayor Mohammed (who was not in charge of the food drive, but rather Jacobs publicly announced that he was taking it over himself) was called because Jacobs was cussing out volunteers. When she arrived in her vehicle, he yelled at her and swore at her using such profanity that a gentleman stood between her car and Jacobs to intervene.

At the May 10, 2023 commission meeting, Jacobs referenced Mayor Mohammed’s partner as her “baby daddy,” and proceeded to discuss information he obtained from the police regarding official business of the alleged running of expired tags of Mohammed’s partner’s car. The tags were not expired. In the April 12, 2023 meeting, he again attacked the Mayor, stating that the Town hires incompetent people, and that unlike her “I don’t live with my family, I have my own home” (approximately 2:29 of the commission video). Mohammed’s mother lives with her. The running the tag issue was again discussed in detail at the May 24, 2023 workshop.

Mayor Mohammed asserts that Jacobs has no respect for the Town, the commissioners, the meetings, or the staff. His behavior is demeaning, and he behaves like a bully. She says his name-calling on the dais and social media is disrespectful, as is calling the Town they serve a “s---hole.” She said they as commissioners are supposed to have no direct contact with staff regarding workplace/performance issues, but he gets involved. She has received electric correspondences and letters of concern from staff regarding Jacobs. She feels that he also discriminates based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and age, and that continuing this conduct will cost the Town money in litigation.

Next, the allegations regarding male employees and colleagues will be addressed:

Commissioner **William Hodgkins** (Hodgkins) is the current Town Clerk Commissioner. He asserts that Commissioner Jacobs has made several public disparaging comments about him and has subjected him to verbal abuse and threats; facts that Commissioner Jacobs does not deny

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and which are readily apparent on several “Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs”⁹ social media posts and in the commission meetings, as well as in his written communications to the Town Clerk, Marlen Martell, as discussed above. Several witnesses, including Hodgkins, have expressed concern regarding Jacobs creating social media posts that question the integrity of both his fellow commission members and Town employees, including using derogatory terms to reference them, such as stupid, ignorant, and incompetent, and referring to the Town as being a “s---hole” and a “s---show;” all of which Jacobs defended while enjoying his popcorn¹⁰ (see June 14, 2023 commission meeting at approximately 2:03 (“s--- show comments”; approximately 2:41 (name calling of fellow commissioners))).

Hodgkins likewise articulated worry about what he perceives as Jacobs’ verbally abusive and degrading acts towards women, including Jacobs’ homophobic attitude and treatment of the former Town Attorney (who Hodgkins states was very good at her job), and his antisemitic comments and bullying of the HR Director and former Finance Director. He is concerned that Jacobs is creating a hostile work environment for the women who work for the Town. Hodgkins opined that Jacobs uses his authority to abuse and bully people.

Commissioner **Erik Morrisette** (Morrisette) expressed his concern that Jacobs calls Mayor Mohammed and Hodgkins corrupt; both on social media and on the dais. He additionally stated that Jacobs accused them all of committing fraud during the election, both on social media and from the dais, and that he called Mohammed and Hodgkins, as well as several employees of the Town, incompetent. He said Jacobs degrades everyone, including the former Finance Director, the HR director, the Town Manager, and anyone else who disagrees with him; he refers to them as “incompetent” and “idiots.” He describes Jacobs’ behavior as inappropriate and demeaning. He also confirmed that Jacobs used the former Chief of the police department to “stalk” Mayor Mohammed and her family, including having officers sit outside her house and run her family’s license plates.

He opined that Jacobs plays the victim. He believes that Jacob claims everyone is after him, then turns around and behaves provocatively at meetings. Morrisette has had employees complain to him about Jacobs, but he can do nothing. The employees claim Jacobs is humiliating them and interferes with their work.

Hersh “Harry” Taubenfeld (Taubenfeld) is the former Budget and Finance Director for the Town. He started in 2018 and was terminated in 2022. He indicated that it was a toxic workplace the entire time he worked there. He described Jacobs as a narcissistic, bullying leader. He said that Jacobs ridicules everyone who does not agree with him, and that Jacobs started threatening his job in 2021 when Taubenfeld did not agree with his position regarding the budget for the new Town police department. Taubenfeld indicated that Jacobs repeatedly attacked him from the dais, called him unqualified, and told him that he runs a “s---show” in the finance department. Jacobs has also told him to “sit down and shut up” at commission meetings. In

⁹ All pertinent social media posts were provided, and all commission meetings and workshops are available online.

¹⁰ There was not another commission meeting viewed in which anyone was openly eating on the dais, much less a bag of popcorn, which implies one is watching a show. Jacobs admitted doing it for that purpose in a Facebook comment on his “Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs” Facebook page.

December 2021, he filed a complaint with HR regarding Jacobs' attack on him from the dais, citing that it violated Resolution No. 2020-090. A portion of the Complaint provides:

I feel that what happened yesterday was a travesty and personal attack against me. We have one commissioner stating it on the record and another privately saying the same thing. He has created a hostile workplace environment for me. I also believe he is abusing his power and has violated Resolution No 2020-090 Section 3.c (attached) dated December 9, 2020. You can refer to the video from last night's meeting starting at 2 hour and 21 minutes until the end of the meeting. There have been other instances during the last twelve months where the Mayor has made the workplace uncomfortable for me. I didn't follow through last time but at this time, I am left with no choice and I have to protect myself.

3.Elected and Appointed Officials' Conduct with Town Staff

c) Never publicly criticize an individual employee – refer to 2 hours and 32 minutes of the commission meeting dated 12-15-2021.

Elected and appointed Town officials should never express concerns about the performance of a Town employee in public, to the employee directly, or to the employee's supervisor. Comments about staff performance should only be made to the Town Manager through private correspondence or conversation.

See Taubenfeld electronic complaint. Taubenfeld stated that nothing came from his complaint. He was terminated shortly thereafter.

Before this incident, Taubenfeld stated that Jacobs, while mayor, discriminated against him based upon national origin and religion. Specifically, Jacobs told Taubenfeld, who is an Observant Orthodox Jew, that he should be "wearing one of these" pointing to his head and referring to a yarmulke. The mayor's father was present and corrected Jacobs by telling him that he could not make comments like that, and Jacobs responded by stating, "it's OK I have friends who wear them." After that interaction, Jacobs began to go after Taubenfeld at commission meetings. Taubenfeld filed a complaint of discrimination with the Florida Commission on Human Relations regarding this incident.

Information Technology (IT) Director **Mark Pakula** (Pakula) has been with the Town for nineteen (19) years. He explained that he never had an issue with anyone on the commission or working with the Town until Jacobs. He described Jacobs' behavior as enraged and unhinged. Pakula stated that once he started questioning details for the Town police department (he was the IT director for the police department also), Jacobs started going after him. Jacobs publicly called him a liar, and filed multiple complaints against him, including with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). After Pakula questioned the police department issues, Jacobs began claiming that Pakula was in over his head and could not keep up with his job. Pakula described that he had a meeting with the Town Manager and Mayor Jacobs over the attacks Jacobs was making and rumors that were occurring, and asked Jacobs if they could have a conversation directly and try to work together. Jacobs responded that he has to go through the Town Manager with employee issues because of "that f---ing c--- lawyer. She says I abuse my power, so everything has to go through JC." Jacobs made several other accusations against Pakula which were proven

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false (as shown in the electronic correspondence Pakula provided), but Jacobs' rumors and attacks on Pakula continued; the most recent of which accused him of not having the proper authority or clearance to handle the Police Department IT (he does). These accusations increased once the Town moved access to the Identification (ID) system to IT. Whoever had prior access to the ID system was creating improper IDs for retirees and made one for Commissioner Jacobs, on which he was titled "the Police Commissioner" (a position which does not exist, and the commissioner assigned to the police department is Erik Morrisette). When Pakula reported this to HR, Jacobs retaliated against him with another complaint. Thereafter, Jacobs accused Pakula of contacting Jacobs' former employer (Jacobs worked at an airline, but he was terminated during the probationary period) and sharing the story about Jacobs' investigation and termination from the police department in Arizona. Pakula denies doing so and points out that not only is the information from Jacobs' former employer public record, but also that Jacobs had the story hanging on the wall in his mayoral office and showed it to everyone. He further testified that Jacobs had filed a lawsuit against a local citizen in which Jacobs reiterated all of the accusations from Arizona.

Pakula witnessed Jacobs' behavior towards others as well. He described an event (a birthday celebration in the building department for a colleague) at which Jacobs told all present that he could "bend J.C. (the Town Manager) over and do whatever he wanted to him, and he would take it." Other witnesses confirmed this statement. He likewise described a social media post in which Jacobs was "trashing" Friedman and Mohammed. When Pakula said something to Jacobs about it (it is his "Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs" public Facebook page), Jacobs said, "let them sue me, I've got nothing." Pakula also reiterated the "baby daddy" comments Jacobs made to Mayor Mohammed and provided further input regarding the improper use of the police department resources and the impropriety of using information from a police investigation (DAVID, NCIC, and FCIC, for example) in a public meeting; he stated that it was improper and that the police department could lose access to databases such as those for misuse. He echoed grave concerns about other social media posts, such as one in which Jacobs says he "literally and figuratively knows where the bodies are buried," that "you'll die with the lie," "now hiring non-stupid people," "y'all keep messing around . . . and y'all shall find out," and one in which Jacobs posted photos of Pakula and Friedman discussing the hostile work environment investigations. Pakula explained that Jacobs is creating a toxic and hostile work environment and, in his opinion, is escalating. He confirmed that women will not leave the building without an escort and that many employees fear for their safety.

Town Manager **J.C. Jimenez** (Jimenez) has worked for the Town since June 2020. He provided the following: in the past three (3) years, Jacobs has asked him to terminate five (5) employees; no other commissioner has made such a request. Jacobs has filed four (4) official complaints with him against employees (Melissa Anderson, Babette Friedman, Mark Pakula, Harry Taubenfeld). Jimenez confirmed that he sent correspondence to Jacobs regarding his behavior in March 2023, and that Jacobs responded by calling him a "worthless Town Manager" He established that he received the TikTok from Jacobs that Jacobs sent to Melissa Anderson with the caption stating, "this is your town attorney. She has seen it." Jimenez feels that Jacobs' behavior on the dais can be completely inappropriate, that his social media posts on his "Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs" Facebook page disparage the Town and its employees, and that he is causing reputational damage. He also expressed concern that Jacobs' behavior could cost the Town substantial funds in lawsuits.

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On July 31, 2023, Pembroke Park Business Owner/Citizen **Robert Janzer** (Janzer), a member of one of the founding families of Pembroke Park and a former member of the Code Board, contacted undersigned and provided the following: Janzer stated that at the end of December 2022 he was sitting in his office at his business (Embassy RV Park) and Commissioner Jacobs was trying to get into the RV Park. Janzer let him in, presumably to pass out flyers for his campaign, but instead, Jacobs approached him and started making accusations that Mohammed had three (3) felonies on her record, and that former Commissioner Clark had “something to do” with alleged missing funds. Then, at a Commission meeting Janzer witnessed Jacobs making threatening motions and commentary at Commissioner Clark. At another meeting, he witnessed what he described as angry and inappropriate behavior toward Mayor Mohammed. Mr. Janzer believes that Commissioner Jacobs is a danger to the Town. Mr. Janzer also expressed concern that Commissioner Jacobs was driving around in a Town of Pembroke Park police car and wearing a “badge” that said, “Police Commissioner.” He exclaimed that Jacobs would drive the Town police car all over the Town, including into his RV Park.

Third, a review of Commission Meetings, Workshops, and the “Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs” public Facebook page was conducted:

After interviewing all of the witnesses, I reviewed the commission meetings and workshops they mentioned in their interviews. I also reviewed all videos, posts, and comments on the official “Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs” Facebook politician page, which has over 61,000 followers.

A review of the commission meetings and workshops confirms that the behavior on the dais from Commissioner Jacobs about which the witnesses testified and complained is evident. The manner in which Jacobs treats his colleagues and the employees of the Town is offensive, hostile, bullying, unprofessional, and harassing. His complete lack of respect for Mayor Mohammed and the HR Director is evident, as is his contempt for the very regulations he signed into place when he was mayor.¹¹

Likewise, Jacobs’ live videos, posts, comments, and responses to comments on his “Commissioner Geoffrey Jacobs” Facebook page confirm the testimony from the witnesses. While Commissioner Jacobs avows that he is fighting corruption and “cleaning up” the Town, goals which are laudable, attempting to do so by disparaging, bullying, threatening, and harassing colleagues and employees to the point where it creates a toxic, volatile workplace, is improper. His page is replete with threats and disparaging comments about his colleagues on the commission and Town employees.

CONCLUSION

The Investigation Procedures pursuant to which this investigation was conducted espouse that the Town’s mission is “to create and maintain **a work environment in which people are treated with dignity, decency, and respect**. The Town seeks to create an environment characterized by mutual trust and the **absence of intimidation**. **The Town of Pembroke Park will**

¹¹ Jacobs was the Town Mayor when Resolution No. 2020-090 was passed and adopted.

not tolerate unlawful discrimination or harassment of any kind. Through enforcement of this policy and through education of employees, The Town of Pembroke Park seeks to prevent, correct, and discipline behavior that violates any Town, State, or Federal policy, procedure, rule, or regulation.” *Investigation Procedures*, p. 1 (emphasis added).

Accordingly, when applying the facts delineated above to the Town’s mission and the Town’s Code of Conduct, Resolution No. 2020-090, which governs the conduct of elected officials, it is unmistakable that Commissioner Jacobs’ behavior is violative of both. Specifically, his actions violate the following provisions:

1. (b) Practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate. . . Free debate **does not justify nor permit, however, public officials to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments about other officials, Town staff or members of the public.**

(c) Avoid **personal comments that could offend other members.**

3. Elected and Appointed Officials’ Conduct with **Town Staff.** . . every effort should be made to be **cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by each individual for the good of the community.**

(a) **Treat all Town staff as professionals.** Clear, honest communication that **respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual** is expected. Poor behavior towards Town staff or appointed officials is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

(b) **Do not disrupt Town staff from their jobs.**

(c) **Never publicly criticize an individual employee.** Elected and appointed Town officials should never express concerns about the performance of a Town employee in public, to the employee directly, or to the employee’s supervisor. **Comments about staff performance should only be made to the Town Manager through private correspondence or conversation.**

See Resolution. (all emphasis added).

Likewise, the Town owes a duty to its employees to provide a workplace free of harassment, hostile work environment, discrimination, and retaliation. The Town Employee Handbook, which mirrors the EEOC guidelines, provides that “Harassment is **unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex-gender** (including pregnancy), **national origin**, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.” “**To be unlawful, the conduct must create a work environment that would be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people. Offensive conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, isolation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, and interference with work performance.**” *See Handbook* (all emphasis added). The behaviors described in this investigation, including those on video and in writing, establish that Commissioner Jacobs’ behavior is likely considered harassing and creating a hostile work environment.

Additionally, the Town describes bullying as violative of the Town’s Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct. It is unmistakable from the interviews conducted herein that some employees

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and commissioners feel that Commissioner Jacobs has bullied them. The evidence provided shows that the following examples of bullying delineated in the Handbook are likely applicable to Jacobs' actions:

- Threatening, humiliating, or intimidating behaviors.
- Work interference/sabotage that prevents work from being done.
- Verbal abuse.
- Verbal bullying: slandering, ridiculing, or maligning a person or his or her family; persistent name calling that is hurtful, insulting, or humiliating; using a person as the butt of jokes; abusive and offensive remarks.
- Persistent singling out of one person.
- Shouting or raising one's voice at an individual in public or in private.
- Using obscene or intimidating gestures.
- Not allowing the person to speak or express himself or herself (i.e., ignoring or interrupting).
- Personal insults and use of offensive nicknames.
- Public humiliation in any form.
- Public reprimands.
- Repeatedly accusing someone of errors that cannot be documented.

See Handbook.

Finally, the Handbook contains a social media and blogging provision, which states that “[t]he use of **ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the Town’s workplace is strictly prohibited. Proper consideration for the privacy of others and for topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory (like religion or politics) should be exercised. . . . Personal grievances and/or comments that compromise or disrupt the efficient operation of the Administration or represent the Town in a negative light are discouraged.**” *See Handbook* (emphasis added). While Jacobs is not an employee, this provision guides appropriate workplace behavior and should be adhered to by elected officials of the Town; especially when read in conjunction with the provisions in Resolution No. 2020-090, which are applicable to elected officials.¹²

In sum, every person interviewed, regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or age, expressed concern about Commissioner Jacobs and espoused that his behavior has created a hostile, volatile, toxic workplace. The documentary evidence and witness testimony has established Jacobs’ use of foul and wholly inappropriate language, racial and ethnic slurs, abuse of power,¹³ and antisemitic, chauvinistic, homophobic, misogynistic, demeaning, and degrading commentary. There is likewise a pattern of bullying, threatening harm, intimidation, public humiliation, and retaliation evident in Jacobs’ social media posts, from the dais, and in his own

¹² Resolution No. 2020-090 could perhaps be amended to add a social media provision.

¹³ The allegations of use of the police department’s vehicles, employees, and databases to harass and bully others, especially by a decertified former law enforcement officer, may warrant further investigation, as the potential issues caused thereby go beyond the hostile work environment and violations of the Resolution No. 2020-090 for which this investigation was approved.

texts and electronic correspondence. Despite passing the Resolution that forms the basis of this investigation and the Investigation Procedures under which it is being conducted, Commissioner Jacobs refused to participate or provide any information. He was contacted through counsel on June 9, 2023, June 16, 2023, July 18, 2023, and July 31, 2023 to request his participation in person, or through documentation, and inquire if he had any witnesses with whom he would like me to speak. The only response received was on June 19, 2023, in which Jacobs' counsel clarified that Commissioner Jacobs rejected my invitation to participate.