“WHAT’S PAST IS PROLOGUE” (continued)

When Moabite Janet Buckingham, in the same thread asked Soliz why she believed this, Soliz replied, “Speaking with council members personally.”

Other Moabites on the facebook thread responded to Soliz’s comment, asking how council members could have spoken to her about the issue when publicly, they’d claimed they couldn’t discuss the matter at all. But Soliz defended the council member who spoke with her personally, writing, “I think it is reasonable for them to answer direct questions and they did not delve extensively into personnel issues but addressed questions I had about the article in the Sun and Jim’s report.”

But she would not identify the councilperson.

Two days later, Ershadi deleted all of her comments, an action that was noted by Waters and Buckingham. A day later Ershadi removed her facebook page entirely. Over the next month, Councilperson Ershadi re-activated and then de-activated her account at least three times, explaining once that she was, “taking a break from social media.” As of this date, it is not visible to the public.

(NOTE: Fortunately, before Ershadi deleted her comments and removed the post, The Zephyr copied and posted and took screen shots of the entire comment thread. We posted that long thread on the Zephyr Blog in late November.)


WARNINGS AND ‘SURPRISES.’

There is no evidence to suggest that either Davey or Olsen knew they were about to be terminated suddenly, in a matter of minutes. First, both had enjoyed successful years and even decades-long careers with the City of Moab. Both were highly regarded by their peers and by their previous supervisor, City Manager Donna Metzler.

After Metzler retired and the City Council selected Rebecca Davidson as her new administrator, there is no hard information to suggest they’d been warned of a sudden termination.

In fact, during the five months Davey worked with Davidson, he had very little direct contact with the city manager; Olsen, by an examination of emails at least, had none. The results of a GRAMA request by The Zephyr revealed only two emails written by Davidson to Davey and they both occurred during the third week of June.

On June 15, Davey received this admonition by email from Davidson. She wrote, “I have read over your work priorities this week. It doesn’t seem to add up to a full work load this week. Are there other items that you are working on? It is important to me that you are able to produce results each week.”

Davey replied at length.

“...there are no current City documents that you don’t already have access to, regarding economic development status and work plan, so I pointed out to you when we briefly met in mid May (the last and only time we actually had a one to one meeting.) As you might recall from that meeting, I reported that I was hoping, with the hiring of Zacharia Levine, that the potential existed to create an economic development strategy, but until now, I have not heard back from you about that. I am pleased that you agree we can and should move forward. I can, of course, provide you with a plan of action for Economic Development by Thursday PM. We, meaning the City, cannot do it by ourselves, but we have really good partners, including Grand County, Workforce Services, USU! (both through SBDC and the Moab Business Resource Center.) and, maybe most importantly, if we want it actually work, the Moab Chamber of Commerce. And the upcoming 24 hour tour by Lieutenant Governor Spencer Cox...”

According to Davey, he sent the “plan of action” to the city manager and made the Thursday deadline, but never heard back from Davidson regarding the plan. (And there was no record of a response in the GRAMA file) He continued to move forward with other projects and ideas.

And to highlight the point that he was working “above and beyond, Davey candidly noted parenthetically, “(My big question: Since I am considering this well after working hours; does this qualify as comp time?)”

Davidson fired back, “I am seeking documents regarding Economic Development, status and work plan. I understand that SBDC is seeking a BEAR grant for the City. I am interested in what you are doing related to Economic Development. Please provide me with a plan of action for ED. Please be more specific and clear with this document. I would like it by Thursday PM. If you have ques- tions, please let me know.”

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But he’d been advised to hold off on affordable housing initiatives until the City talked with the school district about the possible donation of land to the City, in order to build housing for police officers and other city employees in need.

During the previous winter and into the Spring of 2015, Davey and planning staff had invested many hours designing two new affordable housing ordinances that would increase density in exchange for contracts. The plan would hopefully improve the chances that housing would be more available to low and moderate income individuals and families. But the ordinances had been bottled up in “legal review” for months and months. And he’d been advised to hold off on affordable housing initiatives until the City talked with the local school district about the schools donating land to the City to build housing for police officers and other potential city employees.

And he had been told to hold off on helping a local developer create a downtown development plan to convert much of the property along Center Street and First West into small retail outlets. The idea was to create more affordable venues for local artisans and artists who otherwise were priced out of Main Street locations. Smaller boutique restaurants and outdoor cafes, small plazas, and even an outdoor amphitheater and performing stage were considered.

Davey may have wondered why he kept being put off, on projects like this. On September 23, it became a lot clearer...

TIMNATH & KEMMERTER FLASHBACKS

As this publication noted in its first article on the subject, controversy seems to follow Rebecca Davidson wherever she goes. In 2010, Davidson made state headlines, relating to her five year tenure of employment with The City of Timnath, Colorado. In late December 2010, News 9, the NBC affiliate in Denver, reported that the Timnath Council would meet to “discuss suspended town manager,” Ms. Davidson. According to the report, “Davidson has been manager in Timnath since 2005, working on a contract basis until January, when she became a town employee. Separately, the town has also been paying her engineering firm, IB Engineering, hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. This summer, council members asked for an outside investigation into the town’s contracting and bidding processes. The report by a Colorado Intergovernmental Risk Sharing Agency investigator has not yet been made public.”

“I have read over your work priorities this week. It doesn’t seem to add up to a full work load this week. Are there other items that you are working on? It is important to me that you are able to produce results each week.”

“It also reported that Timnath’s mayor, Donna Benson, “with whom Davidson has clashed,” had also filed a law suit against the Timnath council, “over secret meetings to hear employee complaints about her. Davidson’s complaints about Benson’s interactions with town staff prompted the secret meetings.”


A week later, Davidson and Timnath were back in the Denver headlines when 9News announced Davidson had resigned. The “three-way deal” ended with Davidson’s resignation and the resolution of a $1 million law suit “brought by Loveland-based Gerrard Excavating Inc. against the 633-resident town and Davidson, who until last year was both town manager and the town engineer responsible for overseeing the Old Town sewer reconstruction project.”

9News also reported that, “Davidson was suspended with pay last summer, several weeks after Town Council members received an audit of Timnath finances. Council members cited the need to ‘review invoicing, lack of documentation, fair treatment in the bidding process, town contracts and other processes’ in suspending Davidson but never offered any further specifics.”

The report noted that Timnath officials could not publicly discuss the matter and that, “both sides signed a non-disparagement clause and agreed to keep confidential a report about Davidson written by an outside investigator.”

In June 12, 2011, Coloradoan, Trevor Hughes, titled “Timnath Learns Costly Lesson After Paying Millions for Projects,” Hughes offered a more detailed account. He wrote:

“In 2008, the small town of Timnath east of Fort Collins paid half of its $2 million municipal budget to its town manager and her engineering company. “And while 2008 was a high point of money paid by the town to former manager Becky Davidson and her firm, IB Engineering, it was by no means the only time Timnath spent a significant portion of its money on her and her company.”

“See several years, Davidson/IB received more than $600,000 annually from Timnath, according to an audit and town financial officials. “But a deal struck between the town and Davidson as she left under pressure earlier this year means town officials refuse to answer all but the most basic questions about how town money was spent during her tenure. Town officials say a non-disparagement clause they signed in January means they can’t discuss how Davidson ran the town. (Timnath, CO)”

Trevor Hughes
The Coloradoan, June 2011

The Zephyr February-March 2016


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“I’m going to let the past speak for the past,” new Timnath Mayor Jill Grossman-Belisle said. “We’re trying to use this as an opportunity to learn.”

In the Coloradoan, Hughes explained the city of Timnath’s dilemma. In part, he

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Davidson received a settlement that included nine months of paid salary. Years later, as Moab’s city manager, Davidson felt ten weeks of severance pay was sufficient for Olsen, who had been employed by Moab City for 25 years.


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The Moab City Council became aware of the Timnath controversy before Davidson was hired. The Zephyr’s GRAMA search of city documents shows several related emails between Councilwoman Peterson, Moab Police Chief Mike Navarre, who took charge of vetting city manager candidates, and City Recorder Rachel Stenta. While some of the emails have been redacted, Peterson’s original email makes it clear the subject is Davi-

and found in the Timnath video.