

Key, Lori

From: Mary Haffner <maryhaffner@haffnerlawgroup.com>
Sent: Monday, July 25, 2022 11:55 AM
To: ClerkoftheBoard
Subject: Item no. 9 - Public comment, July 26, 2022 BOS meeting-please read at meeting

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For approximately 8 months, beginning in May of 2021, the county of Ventura investigated a volunteer who serves on the Behavioral Health Advisory Board. This BHAB volunteer did not receive notice of this investigation until October, 2021, when he was telephoned and asked to submit to an interview.

The interview took place on December 21, 2021, via zoom. Present at this interview was the BHAB member, myself and Matthew Haffner as the BHAB member's counsel, the County's independent counsel, and her assistant. This volunteer was questioned for just under 2 hours.

Every question asked by the County's independent counsel involved Sevet Johnson, the current interim CEO. The BHAB member was presented with two BHAB General Meeting zoom videos, a BOS public comment from May 2021, an email from the BHAB member to the current BHAB Chair, and a series of statements that were allegedly made to Sevet Johnson. The series of questions regarding the BHAB Chair email indicated that Sevet Johnson thought it was inappropriate for this BHAB member to be asking questions and that he was overstepping his role.

The BHAB volunteer's counsel provided information to the County's independent counsel, including potential witnesses, emails, and Declarations.

Independent counsel asked the BHAB member if he ever had any private meetings or private telephone conversations with Ms. Johnson. At the end of the interview, he was presented with a series of racist statements and asked if he made these statements to Ms. Johnson.

In concluding the interview, independent counsel stated that she would be interviewing others and that she would be preparing a report for County Counsel's office; she anticipated that the investigation would conclude in early 2022.

A series of emails between our office and both independent counsel's office and County counsel's office were exchanged between the time of the interview and March 2022.

On March 23, the day after Sevet Johnson was appointed as the interim CEO, our office received a call from Matthew Smith of the County Counsel's office. He stated that it was more likely than not that the allegations against the BHAB member did not occur and that the county would like to go back to "business as usual."

It is our understanding that Sevet Johnson is being seriously considered for the position of CEO. This investigation and allegations take on added significance because of her potential appointment. We ask that County Counsel provide all Supervisors with the complete investigative report in this matter.

Thank you,

Mary Haffner

Ventura

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