



Denver City Council Statement regarding the Mayor

3/13/18

RAFAEL G.
ESPINOZA
DISTRICT 1

KEVIN FLYNN
DISTRICT 2

PAUL D. LÓPEZ
DISTRICT 3

KENDRA BLACK
DISTRICT 4

MARY BETH
SUSMAN
DISTRICT 5

PAUL KASHMANN
DISTRICT 6

JOLON CLARK
DISTRICT 7

CHRISTOPHER J.
HERNDON
DISTRICT 8

ALBUS BROOKS
DISTRICT 9

WAYNE NEW
DISTRICT 10

STACIE GILMORE
DISTRICT 11

ROBIN KNIECH
AT-LARGE

DEBORAH "DEBBIE"
ORTEGA
AT-LARGE

The Denver City Council, like many Denver citizens, is concerned about the recent reports of sexual harassment against the Mayor toward a member of his security detail. We want our constituents to know that we take these matters seriously, and we have been working to obtain as much information as possible.

Today, we learned details of the legal environment, past and present, following the reported behavior. The City settled a lawsuit with Mr. Wayne McDonald in August of 2016, after lengthy litigation. Because the legal matter at the time of settlement involved payment of wages, the settlement was paid out of departmental funds and did not require approval by the City Council.

The City settled with Detective Branch-Wise in July of 2013. Because that settlement was paid out of the claims and liability fund, Council did review and approve the settlement by resolution. While there were no claims of sexual harassment against the Mayor at that time, the Branch-Wise settlement also included a standard release of any future claims against the City arising under the same circumstances. Therefore, there cannot be any further litigation regarding the Mayor's actions at this time.

Because Mr. McDonald's settlement agreement includes clauses of non-disparagement, and non-dissemination, it is important that Council members (or any city employee) do not violate those contractual provisions. While Det. Branch-Wise's agreement did not contain the same confidentiality clauses, the parties involved have not disputed the facts that recently surfaced, and we feel strongly that any attempt to further investigate this new matter without her request or consent would be contrary to best practice and risks re-victimizing her.

While we strive to be transparent, City Council members cannot comment further on the legal aspects of these matters given the confidentiality requirements. We want the people of Denver to know that at no time prior to the recent media reports were we aware of the texts currently at issue; we learned of them when you did and have been seeking information ever since.

Council stands against any kind of sexual harassment or otherwise to any person and we commend Det. Branch-Wise on her courage and conviction. Going forward, we are looking at putting processes in place to ensure that we are aware of all settlements that rise to a certain threshold. Regardless of the fund from which it was paid, we want to monitor claims in the city more closely. Again, transparency and accountability are of the utmost importance to us. We will continue to ensure that City employees feel safe to report misbehavior and are free from retaliation. We are continuing to meet with City Attorneys to get answers to our questions. We will do our best to serve the constituents of our city.

Denver City Council

THE LANE LAW FIRM, P.C.

SUITE 475

5105 DTC PARKWAY

GREENWOOD VILLAGE, CO 80111

SEAN J. LANE, ESQ.

ALEX M. PASS, ESQ., ASSOC.

TELEPHONE 303-830-0500

FACSIMILE 303-860-7855

SLANE@LANELAWPC.COM

APASS@LANELAWPC.COM

March 17, 2018

Councilman Albus Brooks, MBA
President, Denver City Council
2855 Tremont Pl., #201
Denver, CO 80205
albus.brooks@denvergov.org
Telephone: (720) 337-7709

Dear Councilman Brooks, and Members of the Denver City Council:

Greetings. I write to you on behalf of my client, Detective Leslie Branch-Wise, of the Denver Police Department. Detective Branch-Wise wishes to respond to the Denver City Council Statement concerning the Mayor, issued March 13, 2018.

Detective Branch-Wise strongly supports the values of transparency and accountability in government. As you are aware, she has served the City of Denver as a police officer for almost 20 years. She believes that the citizens of the City of Denver deserve a full and open investigation of the incident that included Mayor Michael Hancock participating in what she perceived as a pattern of inappropriate sexual behavior. With this firmly in mind, Detective Branch-Wise strongly encourages the Denver City Council to conduct an investigation of this matter.

Detective Branch-Wise notes that one of the stated reasons behind the Denver City Council's decision not to pursue an investigation of this matter is a desire not to "re-victimize" her. As a public servant, Detective Branch-Wise understands that the risk she may experience and the strong negative emotions that the situation with the Mayor and Mr. McDonald created, must be subordinate to her duty to the people of Denver. She believes that only a full investigation of these events will truly satisfy the City Council's stated intent to provide transparent and accountable government for the City of Denver.

She wishes to advise the Denver City Council that she is fully prepared to cooperate with an investigation of the events regarding the reported behavior of Mayor Hancock while she served on his protective detail.

Councilman Albus Brooks, MBA
President, Denver City Council
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My client, Detective Branch-Wise would like me to thank you for your time in this matter.

Very truly yours,

THE LANE LAW FIRM, P.C.

s/ Sean J. Lane

Sean J. Lane

SJL/ld