



June 21, 2017

BY EMAIL ONLY

As you may know, the Village of Wheeling has recently been the subject of a wide range of accusations made by Wheeling resident Deborah Wilson. Since October of 2016, Ms. Wilson has been waging an aggressive campaign of harassment and intimidation against the Village, a campaign that has included both abuse of the Illinois Freedom of Information Act and the wide dissemination of false claims of impropriety. Because Ms. Wilson has broadcast her claims to individuals and organizations that are only indirectly related to the Village of Wheeling and therefore unfamiliar with her specific circumstances, we feel compelled to provide you with some context and history, and to voice our support of our Village staff.

To be clear, the Village of Wheeling is committed to transparency. We strongly encourage our residents to be engaged citizens who do not hesitate to raise concerns about the actions and policies of their local government. In fact, the civic health of Wheeling—like that of any community—depends on precisely this type of engagement.

Ms. Wilson's conduct, however, is of an altogether different character. Ms. Wilson is a former teacher in Community Consolidated School District 62 in Des Plaines. In 2014 District 62 initiated dismissal proceedings against Wilson to terminate her employment for violating a Notice to Remedy. In lieu of termination, Wilson voluntarily resigned her teaching position when she signed a separation agreement with the District. According to official records released by District 62, her notice of termination was directly related to her poor conduct in the classroom and as an employee, specifically that she failed to comply with a Notice to Remedy issued by District 62 to treat all students in a respectful, considerate, and professional manner. Following a flood of electronic messaging directed by Ms. Wilson to District staff and elected officials, she was arrested for harassment by electronic means in 2016. Despite having voluntarily signed a separation agreement terminating her employment, Ms. Wilson has repeatedly asserted that the Village of Wheeling's handling of a dispute with her neighbors in Wheeling led to her dismissal as a teacher in Des Plaines. Specifically, she faults the Wheeling Police Department's decision to issue her neighbor a local ordinance citation instead of a felony charge. She further alleges that the stress caused by the Police Department's failure to arrest her neighbors for a felony led to the behavior that resulted in dismissal proceedings being initiated by School District 62 and is now preventing her from regaining employment as a teacher. Overwhelming evidence suggests that Ms. Wilson's many non-factual allegations of improper conduct by the Village are motivated not by her concern for good government but rather by her ongoing dispute with District 62 and her personal vendetta against the Village.

Ms. Wilson has sent almost 1,000 emails to the Wheeling Village Board and staff since October 1, 2016, even after being warned to cease and desist her harassing behavior. Wilson has circulated her unwarranted accusations not only to law enforcement agencies, but also to professional associations and to leaders of neighboring communities, with the clear intent of damaging the reputations of our elected officials, Village Manager, staff, and attorneys. It is evident that she has crossed the line of petitioning her government to maliciously defame members of our staff and our attorneys out of sheer spite. She has also clearly and specifically threatened to continue to harass the Village until she gets what she wants.

Village Manager Jon Sfondilis has our trust and support. We have never questioned his dedication to this community, and his professionalism through these difficult times is admirable. It is particularly frustrating to see the Village subjected to this constant barrage of ridiculous claims in the midst of the most prosperous era in its recent history, an era that has seen substantial commercial, industrial, and residential development, significant infrastructure improvements, the creation of a revenue source to fund effective flood control projects, and multiple innovative consolidation projects to save taxpayer dollars and improve service.


We are offering this account for the purpose of helping Wheeling residents understand the extent of Ms. Wilson's efforts to disrupt Village activities and target elected officials and Village employees. The cost to residents of the Village associated with responding to Ms. Wilson's emails and requests already totals more than \$144,000 since October of 2016. To date, 1,100 staff hours have been devoted to responding to her emails and Freedom of Information Act requests (which total more than 50, including 160 requested records). At a time when the financial demands placed on local governments is greater than any other point in history, our Village simply can't afford to allow one individual to single-handedly hijack important financial resources.

For the benefit of the Village of Wheeling and its residents, we implore Ms. Wilson to end her efforts to selfishly squander Village resources. As the Board of Trustees, we resolve to do all that we can to prevent her from having further impact on the Village's successful operations, including the use of any legal remedies available to us.

The dedicated individuals who work for the Village—from the management staff to the police officers, firefighters, maintenance operators, inspectors, social workers, and clerks who respond directly to our residents' needs—perform their difficult and highly specialized tasks in the full glare of public attention. We'd like to make it clear that the Village Manager, the Village staff, and the Village's attorneys have the full support and confidence of the Board of Trustees. We're grateful for their continued grace and professionalism in the face of the indignities that Ms. Wilson continues to inflict.

Sincerely,


Patrick Horcher, Village President


Ken Brady, Village Trustee


Mary C. Kruöger, Village Trustee


Ray Lang, Village Trustee


Mary Papantos, Village Trustee


Joe Vito, Village Trustee


Dave Vogel, Village Trustee


Elaine E. Simpson, Village Clerk