

11:24am

Marty: I'm going on the record right now with Emileigh Barnes. This interview is being recorded. She's been given the preliminary instructions, and I'm recording this so I can prepare the most accurate report possible. Today's date and time are July 29th, and it's approximately 11:24 AM. Can you state your name and position with the county?

Emileigh Barnes: Emileigh Barnes, Grant County Assessor's Office.

Marty: OK. And how long have you worked for the county?

Emileigh Barnes: Three years.

Marty: OK. Have you been in the assessor's office the entire time?

Emileigh Barnes: Yes.

Marty: OK. Have you observed or experienced any conduct by Commissioner Poling in the county government workplace that you believe may have been unlawful, questionable, intimidating, or inappropriate?

Emileigh Barnes: Yes.

Marty: Can you describe that for me?

Emileigh Barnes: On March 24th, he came up to check on the office just to make sure that we were OK. I was organizing some papers that we had laying around the office. He asked me if we ordered in bulk, and I told him I don't know. He's like, well, maybe you'd be able to get a raise if you ordered in bulk with other offices, and then he continued to start talking about the jail. Then on Tuesday, March 24th, he brought up Ed Hartman along with two other maintenance men, Mike and Sammy. He just wanted to introduce me to Ed Hartman, and I was OK with that, but it was also my lunchtime. I was kind of puzzled when he brought up Ed Hartman 'cause I don't think that's allowed in the county building.

Marty: Was Ed Hartman an elected official at that point?

Emileigh Barnes: No, he was running for Grant County commissioner,

Marty: So he's a candidate.

Emileigh Barnes: Uh huh.

Marty: OK. And he was introducing him around. Who all was with him?

Emileigh Barnes: Ed Hartman, Chuck, and the two maintenance men, Sammy and Mike. I said hi to Ed, and then he asked me if I was going to vote, and I said, oh, I only vote presidential.

Marty: Who's he?

Emileigh Barnes: Chuck.

Marty: Chuck asked you if you were going to vote?

Emileigh Barnes: Uh huh... If I was going to vote, and I said, oh, 'I only vote presidential.' Then Ed Hartman said, oh, come on now, and that's when Ed came through the door, got into my ear, and said, 'if you vote for this guy, you'll be able to get a raise.'

Marty: Did Ed say that, or did

Emileigh Barnes:Chuck

Marty:say that? OK, so Chuck came around your workstation....

Emileigh Barnes:uh huh..... got into my ear, and said, if you vote for this guy, you would be able to get a raise, and then he left, and then he told me. I was like, 'I just vote presidential', I'll let my husband know.

Marty: What were you trying to do at that point?

Emileigh Barnes: I was trying to eat,

Marty: just trying to eat, ...

Emileigh Barnes:just trying to eat my lunch...

Marty: and not be bothered....

Emileigh Barnes:yeah...

Marty: by electioneering.

Emileigh Barnes: Then Chuck proceeded to tell me I better vote. He voted, he fought for my butt to vote or fought for my butt. He fought in the Army for my butt to vote, my God-given right or something along the lines like that.

Marty: OK, so was anyone else there during this conversation?

Emileigh Barnes: Ed Hartman was there. He came through the door, which he was not allowed past the door. Sammy, the maintenance man, and then Mike, the maintenance man.

Marty: OK. And when you say that Ed was not supposed to be past the door, the assessor's office, how is it accessible to the public?

Emileigh Barnes: Usually taxpayers stay behind the counter.

Marty: OK, there's a counter, and there's a space where a member of the public can talk to you and communicate with you, but they're not supposed to be back behind...

Emileigh Barnes: correct...

Marty: the work area...

Emileigh Barnes: yep, employees only. He came through the door.

Marty: OK, how long did this encounter last, do you think?

Emileigh Barnes: I want to say probably about 3 to 4 minutes they were up there in our office. They could have been shorter, but.

Marty: And did you say anything to anyone about the incident afterwards?

Emileigh Barnes: I went to the real estate side 'cause I'm on the personal property side, and I just was kind of puzzled, and I was like, this just happened. Well, then HR came down and was like, you need to write....

Marty: a statement....

Emileigh Barnes:a statement; that's not OK.....,

Marty: and you wrote a statement about it. OK.

Emileigh Barnes: Yep.

Marty: And HR is in possession of that.

Emileigh Barnes: Correct.

Marty: Do you know whether there was any video evidence of the situation?

Emileigh Barnes: ... there is....

Marty: Have you had a chance to review?

Emileigh Barnes: Yeah, for both days I have them.

Marty: OK, and did the video evidence, in your opinion, corroborate what you described?

Emileigh Barnes: Yes, you can hear basically everything.

Marty: OK, can you hear him saying you'll get a raise...

Emileigh Barnes: Uh huh..... if you listen very, very closely.....

Marty: OK, what authority do you understand Commissioner Poling has to get you a raise?

Emileigh Barnes: He doesn't.

Marty: OK, what's your.....

Emileigh Barnes: I do believe so, that it's the council....

Marty: that decides that, not the Commissioners Office...

Emileigh Barnes: Uh huh. And I could be completely wrong.

Marty: Right...

Emileigh Barnes: I do believe that it is the council.

Marty: Have you ever heard Commissioner Poling talk about the council?

Emileigh Barnes: No, not around me, no.

Marty: Have you had any other interactions with Commissioner Poling that you deemed to be inappropriate, threatening, or coercive in any way?

Emileigh Barnes: After my incident, I have not seen him since.

Marty: OK, do you have, did he in any way physically touch you during this encounter, or was it just leaning in close to you?

Emileigh Barnes: He did not touch me, person, like me, but it was close enough to where it rattled me, and I call it my bubble. I don't like people in my bubble.

Marty: OK, how far away was he from you when he was talking to you? Just a few inches?

Emileigh Barnes: Yes, he got down in my ear.

Marty: OK, did that make you feel uncomfortable?

Emileigh Barnes: Very.

Marty: Did you feel intimidated at all?

Emileigh Barnes: Yes and no. I mean...

Marty: Did you feel like he was trying to exert his influence over you?

Emileigh Barnes: What do you mean by that?

Marty: Like just, was he just trying to convince, coerce you to do something that maybe you wouldn't otherwise do?

Emileigh Barnes: ... like to vote? Yeah....

Marty: ... for a particular candidate?

Emileigh Barnes: ... Yeah.

Marty: OK, and do you have any, is there anything else that you think Commissioner Poling with you has done that you felt was inappropriate or uncalled for?

Emileigh Barnes: No, like I said, I haven't seen him since that whole incident.

Marty: OK, and this was in, was this before the primary this year?

Emileigh Barnes: Uh huh.

Marty: So March of 2026?

Emileigh Barnes: Yeah, the first event, incident, happened on March 20th, and then that's when I was organizing the paper, and then when he got into my ear and brought up the candidate of Ed Hartman, that was March 24th.

Marty: OK, when he talked about buying in bulk, did he mention who they would be buying that through.....

Emileigh Barnes: No...

Marty: ... or how that would be coordinated ...

Emileigh Barnes:no...

Marty:or anything? I think offices have their own budget, so that's why we don't order in bulk.

Marty: Right. OK, and did, have you ever had any interactions with Commissioner Poling outside of work that you considered inappropriate or concerning?

Emileigh Barnes: No.

Marty: OK, do you think, feel that Commissioner Poling has ever followed or spied on you?

Emileigh Barnes: Umm, no.

Marty: OK, umm, have you ever heard him discussing a desire for the county to hire his wife in any capacity?

Emileigh Barnes: No.

Marty: Have you heard of him asking or talking about trying to hire other relatives, friends, or associates at the county?

Emileigh Barnes: No.

Marty: Have you ever seen Commissioner Poling where he appeared to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol during any interaction with you or in your presence?

Emileigh Barnes: No.

Marty: OK, do you think anyone's tried to coerce or intimidate you on behalf of Commissioner Poling?

Emileigh Barnes: No.

Marty: And other than getting in your personal space on those events in March, do you, do you think he got in your personal space on the March 20th incident where he talked about the supplies, or was it the second time?

Emileigh Barnes: He did lean in a little bit, but I was on my feet to where I could step back.

Marty: And you're behind the counter or something?

Emileigh Barnes: Yes, and he was on the opposite side of the counter, so,

Marty: But it was the second time where he came in and was tried to talk in your ear that he got in your personal space. Other than the videos we've talked about, are you aware in the documentation that you said you provided, are you aware of any other documented evidence regarding his conduct?

Emileigh Barnes: No.

Marty: Did Commissioner Poling ever shut you in a room with himself or refuse to let you leave?

Emileigh Barnes: No.

Marty: OK, did you feel like you could step away from him when he was asking you about voting?

Emileigh Barnes: I was sitting down at my chair, so I couldn't really get up

Marty:and move,

Emileigh Barnes: move once he,.....

Marty: and you had your lunch with you.....

Emileigh Barnes:yeah.....

Marty: OK, did so you felt like you know, you pretty much had to sit and listen to him?

Emileigh Barnes: Uh huh.....

Marty: or that you weren't free to walk away...

Emileigh Barnes: correct.

Marty: And has Commissioner Poling's conduct impacted your ability to work at all?

Emileigh Barnes: No.

Marty: How does Commissioner Poling's presence impact the work environment generally at the county government?

Emileigh Barnes: The things like, I don't know, I mean, he took our plants away.

Marty: Tell me about that.

Emileigh Barnes: It was a mess. He, I mean, he just sent out one big e-mail and said plants need to be gone, and I'm like, OK, like, not a big deal. We like to open our window on the personal property side, but we are not allowed to anymore.

Marty: OK, so no fresh air?

Emileigh Barnes: No fresh air at all.

Marty: No plants.

Emileigh Barnes: No plants. I feel like ever since the incident, I have to watch my back at the county building, and that's just me, I'm that type of person, right, but other than that, those are my window and my plants we aren't allowed. They aren't allowed to have

Marty:Is that like impacted morale?

Emileigh Barnes:I mean, it, I'm sorry, what do you mean?

Marty: Does that morale, like, like the feelings of employees, does that, does that bring them down to not have...

Emileigh Barnes: It brings me down to not have fresh air when it's nice outside and no humidity and, OK, yeah.

Marty: Are you aware of any other communications or incidences that you weren't a part of but of a similar nature involving anyone else and Commissioner Poling? Is there anything else that you would like to share or anything else you think we should know about that we've not discussed?

Emileigh Barnes: Not that I can think of, no.

Marty: OK, are there any other people who may have relevant information regarding what you've shared that you can identify?

Emileigh Barnes: No.

Marty: OK, I don't have anything else for you, so umm, at this point we'll end the interview, and I appreciate your time.

Emileigh Barnes: Of course, thank you.

Marty: Alright, off the record at 11:37. Thanks.

11:37am