

9:00am

Marty: Thank you for meeting with me today. My name is Martha Lemert. I've been asked to come in and investigate this matter. Written complaints have been filed with County Human Resources concerning Commissioner Chuck Poling in the manner in which he interacts with others in the county government workplace. I'm an attorney. I'm an outside investigator engaged at the direction of Commissioner Shane Middlesworth and Commissioner Ron Stewart in consultation with the County Legal Department to investigate those written complaints and other related allegations involving Commissioner Poling. You are one of approximately 17 county employees currently identified as having information that may be relevant to this investigation. Information provided by you and others may become public at some point, including if the allegations involving Commissioner Poling are determined to be credible or if disclosure is otherwise advisable or required by law. As part of this investigation, Commissioner Poling will be given an opportunity to be interviewed and to respond to the allegations. You are not the subject of this investigation. Commissioner. Poling is the subject of the investigation and you are being interviewed as a potential witness. The County asks that you be honest, candid, cooperative, and transparent in the information that you provide. Your employer is prohibited by law from retaliating against you for providing testimony, information, or evidence in connection with this investigation. If after this interview, you believe you are experiencing retaliation, please notify the County Human Resources Director who will inform the County Legal Department. Commissioner Poling will be instructed not to contact you regarding your testimony today. If Commissioner Poling contacts you regarding your testimony, please notify the County Human Resources Director who will inform the County Legal Department. This interview is being conducted during normal business hours. It is currently 9:00 AM on the 28th of July of 2026 and as part of your work for the county, you will be paid your normal wages for this time. When possible, it is helpful for you to be as specific as you can regarding dates, times, locations, individuals present and what occurred. It is also understandable if you do not remember every detail today. If at some point in the future you obtain or recall additional information, testimony or documentation that you believe may be relevant to the investigation, you may contact me by email or phone to provide that information and I will provide you that contact information. This interview is being recorded so that I can prepare the most accurate report possible. And again, today's date and time is the 28th of July 2026 and it's 9:00 AM, so please state your name and position with the county.

Beth Winters: Elizabeth Winters.

Marty: And what is your position with the county?

Beth Winters: I am the county administrator and HR director.

Marty: Umm, how long have you worked for the county?

Beth Winters: Since March 10th, 2025.

Marty: 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?

Beth Winters: I have.

Marty: OK. Can you please describe the conduct that you recall in detail?

Beth Winters: The first incident that I witnessed was November 5th of 2025.

Marty: And what occurred on that day?

Beth Winters: Hold on just a second, please. There was a meeting scheduled on that day to discuss files being stored on the 4th floor in the courthouse.

Marty: Who was at the meeting?

Beth Winters: That would be Commissioner Middlesworth, Commissioner Poling, myself, Maintenance Director Mike Simonson, the County Fire Inspector, Brandon Eckstein, the Clerk, Pam Harris. I believe Marty may have been, a County Attorney, Marty Harker, may have been there for the beginning of the meeting, but then the meeting dismissed and the only people left in the room were myself, Commissioner Middlesworth, Commissioner Poling and Maintenance Director Mike Simonson. During the meeting, when everyone was still in the room, Commissioner Poling and Commissioner Middlesworth were talking with Clerk Pam Harris to try to determine how and where the files that were currently stored on the 4th floor of the courthouse were going to go. The fire inspector had written a report and said that the files had to be moved. The floor was not safe to hold that amount of weight of clerks files so they had to go elsewhere. The meeting went fairly well. Everyone, everyone except for those four people had dismissed and Commissioner Poling became agitated with Commissioner Middlesworth because Commissioner Middlesworth was trying to be more of a mediator in the meeting between what I perceived as Commissioner Poling and Commissioner and Maintenance Director, wanting the Clerk to get all of her files out of there like yesterday with, and Commissioner Middlesworth was trying to ease into that. Yes, all the files needed to be moved, but we needed to develop a plan. We needed to have ideas where it was going to go or if there were files that could be destroyed or digitized. And Commissioner Poling became agitated that during the meeting that had since mostly dispersed except for the four of us. He thought that Commissioner Middlesworth did not handle it. In his words, as a man. He thought that Shane was being, Commissioner Middlesworth, Shane, was being too soft, letting the clerk " control him" and that he needed to stand up and be a man. He said that probably 3 or 4 times during that conversation. Commissioner Middlesworth sat there. Didn't say much, but that was actually Commissioner Middlesworth's birthday. And he looked at Commissioner Poling trying to dissipate things and said, "dude, it's my birthday." "Could we could, could we not maybe have this argument, this discussion, this type of altercation," or "it's my 40th birthday." He was, you know, he wanted to celebrate. He wanted to be.... anyway. And, and that angered Commissioner Poling more. Iduring..... up until this point, I had said nothing. And then there was kind of a break in the conversation and I felt like I needed to try to say something, to mediate, to dissipate, to calm things down. So I said something in the way of and, and I don't remember exactly what I said, but I said something that was in agreeance with something that Commissioner Poling had just said. And he looked at me with this ice cold stare and said you're not the boss, we're the bosses. You need to shut your mouth. We're in control here, You're not, I said, 'Sir, I was just agreeing with you.' I was trying to..... and he said something similar to what he said previously and I said 'OK, I'm out.'

Marty: So he's, he repeated, You're not the boss, Shut up.

Beth Winters: Yeah.

Marty: Yeah, shut your mouth.

Beth Winters: And at that point.....

Marty: What? What tone of voice was used there?

Beth Winters: Oh, he's, he's loud. He, he's, I mean, he's traditionally a loud speaker a loud.... He, he talks louder, especially when he's trying to get his point across. He's a very brash, harsh type speaker.

Marty: Was there anger in his voice?

Beth Winters: Oh, yeah, yeah, it was, very agitated and angry because he had sat there during this meeting and heard the clerk, who he does not care for, and they had had previous altercations in the courthouse, and we'll talk about that later. So there was a history between the two of themwhere they did not get..... She didn't like him, he didn't like her. And so he was sitting there. I could just see it during the meeting. He was, the more that the clerk spoke, the more agitated he got and then went once she left and the fire inspector left. And I honestly, don't... I feel like Marty was there, but I don't.... Honestly, I must have blocked that out, but I feel like he was there. He would have to confirm that because I think he was, but I think he left because he had a court.

Marty: Something else.

Beth Winters: Anyway, but he wasn't there during this, this altercation.

Marty: So when the four of you were there after the meeting, were you all seated at a table?

Beth Winters: We were all seated, Shane was at the head of the table. I would have been where your jacket is, Mr. Poling would have been at this chair and the maintenance director would have been in this chair.

Marty: And where did this meeting take place?

Beth Winters: 6th floor county building in the Commissioners conference room. The door was closed and then Commissioner Poling said what he said. You know, they were, it was not.... nothing was going to dissipate. You know, even when I tried to kind of mediate and deflect, maybe, I was trying to.

Marty: Deescalate.

Beth Winters: There you go, there you go. So trying to, even after I said what I said, he got mad. He stood up. I'm not effing tolerating this and it that may not have been those exact words so don't quote me there, but.

Marty: Well, did he did he actually use the F word or was it just effing?

Beth Winters: Yeah, he did. He did. And then he used the F word, stormed out, and the maintenance director went behind him.

Marty: So he used the F word. I'm not fucking dealing with this and trust me, I've heard everything.

Beth Winters: So yeah, I'm sure you have. I'm sure you have.

Marty: Have about my ears.

Beth Winters: And, and trust me, I in the last year and a half, I've said it too a lot, because I just, you just can't make this stuff.

Marty: How how long did this go on -- this post meeting rant?

Beth Winters: Maybe 15 minutes, maybe.

Marty: OK, Did Commissioner Middlesworth say anything?

Beth Winters: Not much. Not much because he has experienced the wrath of Commissioner Poling more than once. He and he's not confrontational, but the other one is.

Marty: Did the fire inspector....

Beth Winters: He was gone by then.

Marty: OK, so it was just, it was just what about Mike Sinnison? What, did he say anything?

Beth Winters: No, no. Later that day, as I'm driving home, I called Mike Sinnison, the maintenance director, and I asked him, I said, so how's your friend? (Because they are friends) They were friends before Mike was hired and Mike was hired to be the maintenance director. He said, well, you know, he'll, he'll be OK. He said when he gets that way, there's just no calming him down. And I, I said, I, I understand. I, you know, I, I, I mean, he was upset enough that I was afraid that he might do something drastic or his, or his blood pressure might be so high that it might cause a health issue. I, I've known him, Commissioner Poling, a long time, but on a personal level, not, you know, we're not friends, we're not, we don't hang out, we're not. But he has done business for us through his plumbing business because for years. So I, I've, I've known him a long time, but not not personally more, more business related. But anyway, I, I, you know, and I, I, you know, I'm human. I, I genuinely can, am concerned. I don't want someone to, you know, I want someone to, you know, I want, I would love for people to all get along. I know that's not the way the world is, but I don't wish anybody any bad. I called and I just checked on this and said, is he OK? He said he'll be OK. And then he didn't, he didn't come in the office for a while.

Marty: You mean Poling didn't come in the office for a while?

Beth Winters: Correct.

Marty: And and did you document this situation?

Beth Winters: Yes and I have that written documentation I think if you have copies of.

Marty: I want to show you what's dated November 5th, 2025 and ask you to identify that. Is that the statement that you wrote?

Beth Winters: Yep.

Marty: Did you write it on or about that date? 00:16:29 Marty: November 25th, November 5th of 2025? And so you created that the same day that you

Beth Winters: Might have been the next day.

Marty: it might have been the next day, but it was the events of that day. OK, why did you create that documentation?

Beth Winters: Well, in HR if you don't document, it didn't happen and I had been there by that time. 6-7-8-9-8-7 months.

Marty: since March.

Beth Winters: Yeah. And I had..... we had already dealt with..... I'm trying to get my timeline right..... We'd already dealt with the situation at the commissioner's meeting in May, with Commissioner Poling bursting out against an employee whose name is Megan Glickfield.

Marty: And what hadthat was during the commissioners meeting?

Beth Winters: It was, it was.

Marty: Was it recorded?

Beth Winters: It was and I can get that to you. I didn't.... I haven't sent that yet, but it is, it is available. So that situation briefly was the courthouse.... So Commissioner Poling and Commissioner Middlesworth took office at the same time in January of 2025, and they kind of went gangbusters trying to fix things because the previous administration hadn't been as they, they hadn't, there was some deferred maintenance.

Marty: OK.

Beth Winters: So the.....

Marty: On on county buildings.....

Beth Winters:county buildings, yes. So you know it was, you know, the cleaning company hadn't really done a great job cleaning. We just, it really needed some attention and Commissioner Poling and Commissioner Middlesworth had, along with the maintenance team, had really kind of jumped into construction and renovation mode because things needed attention. Well, Commissioner..... Megan, who is a, I can't remember what her title is, but she works in Superior Court 1, she's a bailiff maybe or a clerk type. She's she's not a not an attorney. She works in the court. She had developed this PowerPoint presentation that she brought to the commissioners meeting and wanted to, in the public comment section, wanted to discuss the things that had not yet been handled. Things are dirty, toilets weren't working. It was that type of disclosure. And Megan Glickfield was a little..... she was trying to..... you haven't done this, you haven't done this. She was poking the bear a little bit, and he kind of lashed back at her in the meeting. And there were some email exchanges and I just now thought of that too. So I will need to get that to you as well. But anyway, so there was a big hoopla in the newspaper. It was, it was a big. So we were trying to kind of fly under the radar. So you asked me why I felt like I needed to do this. I felt like that was the direction we were going, that somebody was going to sue somebody, and I needed to have some documentation to follow it up. So that was the first incident. Then there was another incident in between him and the the clerk that happened maybe in June or July that year. And that was, there was some video recording, but no audio. But Commissioner Poling and Mike Simonson, again, we're in the courthouse together and arguing with the clerk and some of the clerk's employees. It got loud. The

prosecutor's office got involved because they were across the hall and heard this, the verbal scuffle.

Marty: Yeah.

Beth Winters: Then the deputies that work in the courthouse were called and he was not physically escorted out of the building, but they walked with him out of the building. So they didn't like, they just said, Mr. Poling, you need to leave. And Mr. Poling is the kind of person that he likes the power and has said, I'm a commissioner, we own these buildings, I own these buildings. Do you not know who I am? The power is important.

Beth Winters: So that was all in the newspaper and the video was released. And so that was it. It it it seemed to me that my job was going to be documenting the mess.

Marty: When you say the newspaper, what newspaper ?

Beth Winters: Chronicle Tribune.

Marty: Chronicle Tribune OK,

Beth Winters: They are not really a, like they, they print three times a week. they used to be a big city paper, but you know, everything has gone the way of

Marty: Digital.

Beth Winters: Digital social media. We have two " news sources" that are on social media in Grant County. 1 is -- he goes by channel 27 WMTV, but he's a social media outlet. The county pays him \$2000 a month to maintain the Commissioners' Facebook page and the media outlet for the county. There is another one that is Count County Pulse News or Marion Source News that the county does not pay, but I believe he is compensated in other ways.

Marty: But the Chronicle Tribune doesn't have those connections.

Beth Winters: No, no, they, they, there is a, a reporter that comes to all of our commissioners meetings and does report, but they are not as relevant or as widely followed as those other news sources. So the clerk altercation with Commissioner Poling happened so that it seemed like almost every month there was an incident that was requiring my attention to be pulled away from things that I needed to do every day in order to help manage or maintain that situation.

Marty: Have have you, have there been anything else between June and July and this November incident involving Poling that you're aware of?

Beth Winters: Yes, rewind back up. Umm, so there was a..... I think what prompted the Megan Glickfield, umm, presentation, let's say, umm, the commissioners sent out a message effectively prohibiting personal fans, personal heaters and plants in offices-- that was not received well at all. That email was sent out like May, I'm going to guess 5th of 2025, somewhere the beginning part of May. The reason being for the, the heaters, they each window kind of had a heater. You know, it was those kind of radiator heater things. And because the commissioners had been trying to fix things that had deferred maintenance, the company that we hired to come and do the repairs realized, saw how dirty that all of those heater vents were. Quite a few people had plants sitting in the windowsill by the heater vents. So there's dirt, there's leaves, there's stuff.

Marty: Debris.

Beth Winters: So that prompted, Hey, we're we're going to take these plants out because some of the offices literally looked like a jungle, not even not, just too much. A little plant on your desk is fine. One in the corner like that is fine. But some of them had, you know, they had the vines and it was it was a lot. And then also reason for removing the heaters and the fans was so that when you are trying to regulate the heat in the room and you have individual thermostats, if you and I put in, you know, 2 heaters in this room, this heater is not going to work because that thermostat thinks it's plenty warm enough.

Marty: Right.

Beth Winters: So not only are you using extra electricity here, but this is not..... this system's not being able to work because these are heating the room. Same thing with the fans: You are messing with the the whole system, the county system-- by your small plug in heater. So that that was that was rough, but it was necessary to be able to find Ground Zero for this system. If if there really how that...

Marty: ... and how that system was operating right, right.

Beth Winters: And I, I understood that my, my father, that was the business my father was in. So I I understood that. A lot of people did not and it it got nasty.

Marty: So during the blow up that he had with this employee, Megan Glickfield and that was at the, as I recall, you said that was at the county commissioner meeting, what what was said by him during that, if you recall.

Beth Winters: He's, he said, you, you've got to give us time. But it, it, it was not, it wasn't, umm, angry, but very, uh, I don't know what word to use was loud. Umm, he was he, he, he wanted to say, you know, look at all the great things we've done so far. She was saying look at all the things that you've done so far, but you haven't done the things that are important, you know, ...

Marty:... like the toilets,

Beth Winters: ... like the toilets. Side note, his business, he does, he's a plumber. His business is Chuck's Sewer & Drain. So she kind of said, you know, if you're number one in the #2 business (because that's his tagline-- it's his slogan for his business) You're not number one. I don't know exactly. I'm, I'm, I'm paraphrasing. You're not focusing on the number one thing that you need to be focusing on. You know, we need new toilets. So, so subsequently the whole courthouse got new toilets because his son, who works for him, donated the toilets to be installed in the courthouse. And then our maintenance people and Mr. Poling installed those on the weekend on overtime.

Marty: Who installed them on overtime?

Beth Winters: Commissioner Poling and the maintenance staff.

Marty: Maintenance staff of the county?

Beth Winters: Yes, and perhaps some of the of Mr. Poling's employees, probably his son that works for him.

Marty: So yeah, So what? So what else besides these two interactions, one involving the clerk where the prosecutors came out and the one involving Megan and this one what else during this time frame in 2025? OK. This is going to be a continuation of the interview. It got interrupted quickly by a phone call that came in that I put to voicemail. But the question was what else occurred during that time frame in 2025?

Beth Winters: The--- I had to pull out my notes. This situation happened before I started, with my predecessor, Justin Saathoff and Aubrey Fuller.

Marty: Who is Aubrey Fuller?

Beth Winters: Aubrey works in the Recorder's office. This was in January, it happened on the 30th of January 2025. Aubrey was coming off the elevator and they, you know, one was coming off one was going on and, kind of looks like both of them were kind of shocked, when, you know, when you're in your own thoughts and you get on an elevator, you don't expect anyone to be there and you're getting off the elevator and you don't expect anyone to be there. But they were both kind of taken aback. She said, excuse me. And Chuck allegedly flashed open his coat because it was January and said that he almost pulled his gun on her. Justin asked if she actually saw a gun. She said she did not due to her vision being bad. She asked if he asked if Chuck was alone, stated that he, he was with the new maintenance director, Michael Simmonson. She felt as though Chuck did this in an intimidating and threatening manner. She's stating that this has caused mental anguish and anxiety and now afraid of retaliation for talking about it, said that she feels unsafe here in the workplace now. And Commissioner Poling and Commissioner Middlesworth were notified of the incident and they put a call into the attorney at the time. Chuck said that he said it was in a joking manner and that he does not carry a gun. However, after that, probably in, I'm gonna say June or July, the commissioners added a ordinance to the county ordinances that it is OK for commissioners to carry weapons, guns, in the county facilities. Not for everyone, just for the commissioners.

Marty: And that was in June or July of 2025?

Beth Winters: I don't know that exact date. But at a commissioners meeting, and I can, I can get that ordinance for you as well if you need it. Aubrey is a veteran, a military veteran and Aubrey filed a EEOC charge of discrimination.

Marty: Against whom?

Beth Winters: Against the county as a whole. She was on FMLA and due to things with her previous military service and it was disclosed to one of the news sources known as Ed Bounds or Ed Bounds Live After Dark and that is a county blog post that is used as news and Ed said that that was a county employee that was on FMLA leave for PTSD on the newscast on the podcast. Uhm...shouldn't have been disclosed, but.

Marty: Who disclosed that?

Beth Winters: I can't confirm that, but I believe because of the relationship that Commissioner Poling has with Ed Bounds, I believe that that was disclosed by Commissioner Poling.

Marty: Why do you ... What kind of relationship do they have?

Beth Winters: Commissioner Poling --- his LLC quitclaim deeded a building recently to Ed Bounds Ed Bounds' business. So it was a business to a business quitclaim deed and

Ed Bounds uses that for his studio. Ed Bounds also did quite a bit of advertising for the candidates that were running for election in in May. But Ed Bounds -- his business-- nothing is disclosed on any of those campaign documents. I'm sorry, I'm kind of all over the place.

Marty: Yeah. No, that's OK. So, so it's a lot.

Beth Winters: Its very multifaceted.

Marty: Sure and and so in terms of disclosures, was this quitclaim deed or anything else, you're saying that on campaign finance paperwork and what-not, there's nothing disclosed regarding any of the business relationships that Commissioner Poling has?

Beth Winters: Commissioner Poling has completed every year I believe since 2022, has completed a conflict of interest form and his conflict of interest form only reflects his business as a plumbing and/or sewer and drain business, not as his property or his business, LLC for properties is Chomp Properties. C-H-O-M-P Properties.

Marty: And that's like a real estate investment

Beth Winters: Yeah, I think yeah, business.

Marty: And that's not disclosed on his forms. But the Chomp Properties LLC is owned by....

Beth Winters: ... And he's the single person on that LLC.

Marty: Are there other examples of his conflict or interactions with other county employees or.....

Beth Winters: yes, so there's, I I don't know if you want me to go chronologically or that would.

Marty: That would be helpful.

Beth Winters: OK. Yeah. So we talked about, I have a little bit of a list here. We talked about the clerk a little bit. Umm, prior to me taking office, and you can ask about this, uh, later, umm, Commissioner Poling because of the nature of his business, umm, is in the, uh, health department a lot because of his, uh, installing sewers or not sewer septic, septic.

Marty: Septic systems.

Beth Winters: And there was an incident and I don't have a lot of details, but I know that it did happen and I know people that can confirm it for you. He was, he didn't like what someone in the health department said. And he is always a very, he's not he gets kind of gets in your personal space. He's very close talker and he actually head- butted someone that was a county employee at the time.

Marty: Who was that employee, do you know?

Beth Winters: Last name Gamble G-A- M-B- L-E I believe his first name is Jake.

Marty: And he worked in the health department.

Beth Winters: He did. The other health department employee that saw it is Alice Quinn. She's no longer at the health department. She now works for the state in the state health department.

Marty: And when did that occur roughly?

Beth Winters: Quite a while back.

Marty: So it's before he became a commissioner?

Beth Winters: Yes, I believe so. I only just learned about it recently. There was an incident also in 2025 in the health department with the director of the health department. This was February 7th, 2025. I do believe I have provided the paperwork that discusses that situation, but Commissioner Poling, there was a situation where another county employee, Cami Savage, had problems on her property relating to a drain and/or her septic leaking into a county drain. or I don't pretend to understand that business, so I'm paraphrasing quite a bit there, but that someone called the health department said that sewer raw sewage was leaking onto their property from the other person property. Commissioner Poling was involved in that situation where he was going to work on the drain or going to make an assessment of the drain. And I guess the Health Department director, Tara Street, either sent one of her employees out there to check it out or they were called and asked to come and check it out, and then there was an altercation up on the 6th floor at the commissioner's area, not on camera, but where Commissioner Poling got very, very close in Tara's face and was yelling and maybe not touching her on the chest, but pointing at her very close, Like you're going to do this, you're going to do that. You can't do this to the point where she was concerned for her safety. It's a lot.

Marty: Do you need to take a break?

Beth Winters: No, I'm good.

Marty: What other examples do you did you personally experience involving Commissioner Poling behaving in some way that you deem inappropriate?

Beth Winters: Yes.

Beth Winters: So there was a commissioners' meeting January 20th. That was on a Tuesday because January 19th was Martin Luther King Day. So we were closed for Monday. We're there on Tuesday. We were upstairs prior to the commissioners' meeting and Commissioner Poling came in and was agitated, visibly agitated. Commissioner Middlesworth was sitting at his desk and he's kind of in the back of the room, kind of at a corner. And Commissioner Poling kind of came back there. And you know, when you're, when you're sitting at a desk in a corner, you can't really get away.

Beth Winters: So you're stuck.

Marty: Yeah.

Beth Winters: And Commissioner Poling was getting agitated, getting upset, feeling that I've been out sick or saying I've been out sick. You guys have changed things. And my understanding is Commissioner Poling fell off of a ladder and hurt himself and was unable to walk very easily. So he did not come in and did not was not in the building very much at all between that November 5th incident where he yelled and this January 20th meeting. He would call on very rare occasions and and talk with me or but but he

was he was very much out of the building a lot. Our meetings are streamed so you can watch the meeting if you want to see what's going on in the meeting, but I don't believe that he did. 00:49:57 Beth Winters: So January 20th he comes in, yells at Shane for a while. I don't remember much of what was said there, but he felt very much that him that that Commissioner Poling and and Commissioner Stewart had changed a lot of stuff.

Marty: You mean Commissioner Middlesbrough and Commissioner Stewart had changed a bunch of stuff while he was gone.

Beth Winters: ... While he was out, and he he got upset shortly before this last blow up, one of the county attorneys, Ed Ormsby, walked into the room and kind of caught the end of this altercation, and Chuck, excuse me, Commissioner Poling kind of storms out and he says that's it, I'm quitting. I'm my wife's going to write my letter of resignation. I'm I'm done, I'm done. I don't want anything to do with it and stormed out.

Marty: Did he not attend the meeting that was going to happen?

Beth Winters: No, he did not.

Marty: Did he ever write his resignation?

Beth Winters: Nope. If he did, it was never turned in.

Marty: Would you say that what, during this incident on the day after Martin Luther King Day, was he how.... What was his tone of voice?

Beth Winters: Loud, agitated, angry, like a snake that was backed into a corner.

Marty: And how did Commissioner Middlesworth respond?

Beth Winters: Again, he's he's pretty tolerant and didn't say a lot like like the November 5th incident, but also felt a little trapped and a little uncomfortable. 00:52:23 Beth Winters: I think. I don't mean to speak for him. I'm, I'm just, that's kind of how I, how I.

Marty: Those were your observations.

Beth Winters: Yes. So that was January 20th. We had our meeting on Tuesday that like half an hour later didn't see much of him. He.....

Marty:Following the meeting you didn't see much of him

Beth Winters: correct...

Marty: ...After he stormed out.

Winters: Yeah, I took a couple days off that following week and the day before. So I came back on January 27th, but the day before that, Commissioner Poling came upstairs to the 6th floor with two other employees and cleaned out his desk area. Those two employees were Mary Wiesner, who is the Drainage Board secretary, which Commissioner Poling is a drainage board president, and Belinda Benefield who was at the time, worked in the area plan department, a long time friend of Commissioner Poling. So after cleaning out his desk on the 26th, Felicity Miller, the HR coordinator

that was there, you know, her and I kind of talked to him. We kind of thought, well, maybe he really is going to quit, you know, clean out your desk.

Marty: Sure.

Beth Winters: Thank you. Somebody's quitting January 27th. I'm back from a couple days off. I'm in the office that morning at 11 would have been a drainage board meeting. So he came upstairs yet again and kind of cleaning out a few things, getting a things, few things off his desk. I was on the phone when he walked in with Commissioner Middlesworth. I got off the phone and I said, hi, Sir, how you doing? Because he's still my boss and I'm trying to be cordial. And you know, if, if he's quitting, then so be it. If he's not, then he's still my boss. And he said just trying to figure out how how to work with a bunch of snakes. And I said snakes, what are you talking about? And he said to me, Beth used to call me every day. And I said, well, you used to call me every day too -- the phone works both ways. I've been busy trying to do work. I'm trying to get things done. So at that point, so he was sitting at his desk in his cubicle. And at that point, he gets up from the desk, comes toward me, puts his arm around my shoulder. Like like around, not around my neck, but around.

Marty: Around the back of your shoulder...

Beth Winters: Yes, thank you.

Marty: Grabbing your opposite shoulder yes, thank you.

Beth Winters: Yes, thank you... I was trying to figure out how to explain that, and pulls me into the conference room, closes the door behind him. I am able to kind of crouch down and get out from underneath of the arm.

Marty: The arm, right?

Beth Winters: Knowing that I needed some space to collect myself because I wasn't sure what was coming. So I walk in and there's a half drink bottle of water sitting on the table And if I'm coming from like that door, the water is on the corner of the table there-- I grabbed the water, I get out from underneath him and I walked to the sink to pour it out because we have a sink in there.

Marty: Right.

Beth Winters: And I go to the sink and I open the bottle of water and I pour the bottle of water out and he's talking loud. Just talking fast, loud talking. And I turn around and he's right here.

Marty: How far away was he from your face?

Beth Winters: 3-4 inches maybe, maybe 6 at the most depending but it felt like his nose was like.

Marty: He's right up in your face.

Beth Winters: And I'm up against the kitchen counter.

Marty: How did that make you feel?

Beth Winters: Pretty strong person. I was scared because I didn't know where it was gonna go.

Marty: Were you afraid that he would physically attack you?

Beth Winters: I thought maybe.... , you know, and I, I had... Felicity was in her office. She did see him, put his arm on my shoulder and pull me into the conference room, but she didn't follow in. She stood kinda outside the door and tried to listen. She said told me afterwards but couldn't hear anything that was said. Umm, it was about 40 minutes, 40-45 minutes that he stood there yelling-- everything from telling me not to believe Ron because he never does anything and Marty can't be trusted..... Not you, Marty..... Marty Harker..... that Shane flipped that Shane was not the person that he ran with. And you know, Shane was on the other side now--random stuff too. Like he was all over the place just talking about President Trump and, and the Muslims that are taking over Dearborn, MI. And then if we don't stop them, they're going to be here too. And I, I, I just started agreeing with him, trying to deescalate, trying to cause I needed to get out of this situation and he was still right here in front of me.

Marty: And you were pinned up against the counter. Did you have an easy way to escape Where was I mean that could?

Beth Winters: I mean I could have slid out probably, but I was I was paralyzed. I felt paralyzed. I was afraid to move and he's even when he's not being this way, he is very, he needs people to agree with him. He needs your acknowledgement and he will push you like on the arm: " You know what I'm saying?" "Know what I'm saying?" "You know what I'm saying?" Trying to.

Marty: So he'll, he'll push people on the arm and while he's telling them that they need to agree with him?

Beth Winters: Yeah. You know what I'm saying?

Marty: Great.

Beth Winters: You know, isn't that right? Know what I'm saying?

Marty: Right.

Beth Winters: Finally, it was he had calmed down enough that he walked away, kind of looked out the window and I walked over and opened the door and I said, well, I, I need to get back to work and he left. I've, I've, I've never felt like that in an employment situation. And I've worked for the military, I've worked for state level people. I've never felt that.

Marty: Is he is Commissioner Poling? Does he ever just change his demeanor quickly like you said it?

Beth Winters: If he feels like you're not agreeing with him.

Marty: Can you can you give me examples of that happening where someone didn't agree with him on something or he felt that someone was?

Beth Winters: I mean, he's he's kind of done that some in commissioners' meetings, but it that situation in November that I mentioned where they were in there and....

Marty:With the clerk, with the

Beth Winters:The clerk and he felt like Shane wasn't on his side. He has said more than once, if you're not with me, you're against me. And you know, I, it, it is the list and the, as I, the longer I work there, the more concerned I am for my safety, my family's safety, my coworkers' safety. I am, I am a protector. That is my core. I want to, I will protect you. You come here, I'll take care of you. And I can't do that.

Marty: Did you document this interaction you had with him in the conference room?

Beth Winters: I did.

Marty: January 27th. 01:03:47 Marty: I'm going to show you what I've received as documentation. Is that what you created?

Beth Winters: Yes, ma'am. Yes, that's it.

Marty: And you did you create that at a similar time to when the events happened OK.

Beth Winters: Or so.

Marty: Since that January 27th, 2026 incident with him, have you had any other interactions with Commissioner Poling that you thought were inappropriate or concerning?

Beth Winters: Nothing. Nothing else physical, but he's been very agitated, very short with me. Very. You know, I've worked for hard bosses before I can, I'm I'm pretty tough. I'm I'm not I'm not a meek woman, but this is off the charts. This is there are he's, he's he's accusatory, he's short tempered. I just recently I get a phone call saying that there's a time card issue that someone in the Assessor's office has taken time off-vacation time before they are eligible to. 01:05:47 Beth Winters: They haven't accrued that vacation time yet. And Commissioner Stewart calls me and says, what did you do to make Commissioner Poling mad? And I said, I, I don't know. What did I do now because I, I'm, this is out of left field. I, I don't, he said, well, he's saying that you and Felicity should have caught this time card issue. And I said, what time card issue? I don't know. And then he explained that, you know, there's something wrong with the someone in the Assessor's office that they've taken vacation when it wasn't eligible. And Commissioner Poling earlier that morning had called Commissioner Stewart that and, and let me explain that Commissioner Poling never calls Commissioner Stewart unless he wants something. They don't, they're not friendly, they don't see eye to eye, they don't get along. But he called Commissioner Stewart because he wanted to get Commissioner Stewart on his side against me, because he wants to find grounds to terminate me and Felicity. Let me just tell you, I didn't work for seven years before I took this job. I don't need this job. I came because I was asked to serve and to help Commissioner Poling fix the county because that's why he wanted me to come here, was for me to help fix the county because it was broken.

Marty: So did Commissioner Pauling recruit you to the position?

Beth Winters: He did, he did for about a year, called me once, twice, three times every month and said, hey, can you come to work? I need you to come to work. I need, I need, I need somebody there I can trust. I need, I need somebody good. I need somebody on my side and I, I, I walked in there and, and I will tell you that I was, I was on his side because I thought that everybody else were the bad people. And I was on his side and I, I made, I, I made excuses for him in rooms he was not in because people

said he's violent, he's mean, he's crooked. He's this, he's loud, he's brash, he's hateful, he's, and all of these things. And I said, no, he, he talks loud, he's brash. I, I, his delivery may not be the best, but he means well. He just wants to do the best for the county. And I made those statements because I, that's what I understood. But when I walk into a job such as this, you know, I had been told this for about a year. He had wanted me to come to work, come to work, come to work. And when there was a position open for me and that I said, well, I'm not coming for free – it was a position that was within the price, the the pay range that was worth it for me to, to not be semi retired anymore. I said OK, I'll do it, but I also go in with my eyes open and I pay attention and I listen and I watch. And the things that I saw made me realize that I had bit off more than I thought I was getting at the time that there were, there were definite issues here and things definitely needed fixed. But the people that I was told that were bad weren't the only ones that were bad. There was there was an issue, there were workplace issues, harassment issues, intimidation issues that should not be happening, but they were. 01:09:57 Beth Winters: So back to the time card issue. I don't even see the time cards until after payroll is already paid because that's that's what a payroll clerk does.

Marty: Payroll clerk and then the immediate supervisor of whoever the person is.

Beth Winters: Which is the payroll clerk and the Auditor, then once all of that's done, then we get all the time cards and then you know, the process, you know, the way we've always done things, because I hate that phrase that gets used in this county a lot. But they send them upstairs and our department is supposed to stamp the three commissioner signatures on each time card. When there's 400 employees, we stamp the time cards and then we take it back to the office. Never have I ever sat and said, oh, this person doesn't have vacation. Why are they taking vacation? Because I can't keep track of all of that. And I don't, yeah. I don't see the pay like the everything is very manual in our county. Very, very. If we had a payroll system that would track that, it would be so much easier. you could type it in, Oh, well, this person doesn't have vacation, we need to do something different here, but we don't have that. So we checked with the Assessor and we said, hey, what's going on? She said, well, that happened like two or three weeks ago, why are you just finding out about this now? And I said, I don't know. I just got a call that we, we missed something. The, the payroll clerk and the Auditor, specifically the payroll clerk, again is very close friends with Mr. Poling. And I believe that the payroll clerk and, or the Auditor said, hey, those people upstairs didn't catch that. So you need, you need to do something about it. And, and again, that's not something that someone at the commissioner level should be involved with. If there's a payroll issue, you go to the first supervisor and you go to the Assessor and you say, OK, is there an issue? Let's let's resolve this. These commissioners shouldn't even be involved.

Marty: Right.

Beth Winters: Unless it it can't be resolved and then it rises, and then if this level can't do it, then you go to the next level. That's the way you should handle issues on the lowest level possible. But that's not the way it's done in this county because Commissioner Poling has told the Treasurer's Office and other offices that Beth and Felicity can't be trusted. So if you have HR issues, you come to me.

Marty: Do you think he's trying to gather information to get you terminated?

Beth Winters: Yeah, and I don't care. I am in this job to do the best I can. But look, I wasn't working before. I don't need this job. You're not going to take a job for me and hurt me.

Marty: Is along those lines, you mentioned that there are issues with the way things have been done in the county in terms of payroll and and employment and whatnot. Can you describe some of the things that you've uncovered since you've been there?

Beth Winters: Well, the, the, county, so the, the Auditor has been in the job for 30, not in that job. She's been with the county for 30 years, so she knows how everything is supposed to be. And just because things have always been done a specific way doesn't mean that that may be the very best way to do things.

Marty: But not always.

Beth Winters: But not always and and people with that close minded thinking may not be open to change or technology.

Marty: You mentioned that the system is very manual still?

Beth Winters: Very much, very much pay payroll is, is our, our time cards are Excel spreadsheets that and that information off of our time cards goes to another Excel spreadsheet and then those sheets are handed in paper to the payroll clerk and then she enters something into our accounting system and then payroll is done through that accounting system. It is very, very antiquated. We, the county tried to have an automated time card system previously and certain departments wouldn't "get on board" because they didn't want to. So they got rid of that instead of saying if you want paid, this is the way you're going to get paid.

Marty: OK. Has -- do you think that you mentioned that Commissioner Poling was trying to reputationally tell everyone that both you and Felicity can't be trusted within the county? Are there other examples of him trying to damage you reputationally?

Beth Winters: There was one situation where I'll go back to --- Commissioner Poling doesn't do a lot of things himself. If he wants something said or done, his friend Ed Bounds, the news guy, he's the one that says the things that Commissioner Poling doesn't want to say himself, but you know under the guise of freedom of speech and trust me, I am all for freedom of speech, but when you when you say something to the effect of, and I have that recording-- this Ed Bounds gentleman is is is a convicted felon-- did spend some time in prison for I believe it was drug related, and he's he's he's a big guy, so he has the ability to intimidate just by looking at him, but he says on his podcast that phrases such as all those entitled bitches up at the county building need to get with the program. He said, I don't, I, I will not go back to prison. So whether I am going to heaven or hell doesn't matter where I go, but I'm going to take some people with me. And right before that, he had said my name, Tara Street's name and Kathy Foy's name, Kathy Foy's name, Foy. So that makes you kind of feel a little intimidated.

Marty: And you have a recording about?

Beth Winters: I do.

Marty: I guess, when did that come out?

Beth Winters: That was right before the elections, so that was probably late April, May.

Marty: Right before the primaries?.

Beth Winters: Yes, ma'am.

Marty: Did you take that as a threat?

Beth Winters: I did.

Marty: And who is Kathy Foy?

Beth Winters: Kathy Foy is the Recorder.

Marty: OK.

Beth Winters: She is Aubrey's supervisor that I mentioned earlier that had the other ...

Marty: That's an elected position?

Beth Winters: It is.

Marty: She had the elevator situation?

Beth Winters: Correct. Kathy has also had incidences with Commissioner Poling and Mike Simonson, the maintenance director.

Marty: Besides the elevator situation?

Beth Winters: yes.

Marty: In your observations and experience with Commissioner Poling, do you observe him treating women more harshly than men?

Beth Winters: Yes, But not exclusively because he did, You know, in the 16 or 17 or perhaps 18 situations that I am aware of, just since my employment here, all of them have been with women, with the exception of the way the situation with Commissioner Middlesworth that I've already mentioned. There was a situation at the highway department just recently where an employee was cussed at because things were not being done the way that Commissioner Poling thought they should be done. And there were, another incidences, incidences with another gentleman that is the county surveyor, as they run into, they kind of go head-to-head with the drainage board and Commissioner Poling is the drainage board president and Mary Wiesner is the drainage board secretary. And the two of them and the surveyor kind of go head-to-head quite frequently over.... "You don't control this, I control that, You're supposed to do this, but you're not doing this, so I'm going to do it, but you're not supposed to do it." --- those kind of back and forth type things.

Marty: Umm, have you ever had the reason to believe Commissioner Poling has ever, umm, followed you or spied on you in some way?

Beth Winters: Umm, I yes. So in the county buildings, we have a camera system. Initially, the camera system was supposed to be installed in wherever the public interacts with county employees. Also, wherever there is cash exchanged. There are cameras in virtually every department on every floor to include, there is a camera right above my desk. As the HR director, there's a camera right above my desk, and employees have verbalized that they don't feel comfortable talking to HR where they should feel safe with a camera in our department. It is my belief that Commissioner Poling watches those cameras all day long. Not just watching me, but the courthouse,

the complex, the, you know, exterior of the building to see when people go out for smoke breaks, all of the departments. And it is obvious where that Commissioner Poling has watched these cameras enough to know the range of the camera, where he can stand, where he can say things, at what level of voice, whether he's going to whisper or to see what people are doing or what he can say or do specifically not on camera because I believe the situation when he pulled me into the conference room in January; he did that because he wanted to get away from the camera that was above my desk. 01:25:39 Beth Winters: Umm, I lost my train of thought. Sorry.

Marty: No, that's OK. Marty: Umm, do you have any umm belief or information that he would be monitoring you or spying on you outside of work?

Beth Winters: I feel like that, umm, he's called me before when I've been on my way to work or at lunch and it's the timing is maybe it's coincidence, maybe it's not, but it feels like he waits until I'm out. So I don't know if you know, is there one of those little tracker things on my car? I don't know. I don't think so, but I haven't. It's just weird, you know, there was a situation after, after Megan had the situation in the courthouse or in the commissioners meeting and she was kind of making a stink about it on the on, on social media, and then things just kind of dropped. And we were told just recently that there was someone sitting out in front of her house with the lights on. And then her neighbor, she said that her neighbor also told her that someone offered the neighbor \$10,000 to take pictures of her just doing normal life. Now, I, I that's, I was just told that recently. I don't it's, it's not in writing, but I was told that by Megan. So again, that makes me concerned.

Marty: And you mentioned that there are 17 or 18 different complaints of people or situations that have occurred and we've talked about several. Are there more that that you're aware of you haven't talked about yet?

Beth Winters: Yes, so, and probably the thing that motivated me to discuss this because I'm still concerned for, like I mentioned, for my safety, the safety of the employees and the safety of my family recently. An employee, there was a position open in the, in the courthouse, in the clerk's office, a full time position, umm, and there is a part- time employee named Gracie. Umm, that part time employee worked in the Treasurer's office. Gracie had wanted to go full time. She, out of the clear blue, sent an application in to Felicity and myself applying for the job in the clerk's office. Gracie is a young sweet girl at, I'm going in her lower 20s, very young, very impressionable, quiet, just, just a sweet girl. And she applied. We forwarded the application to the clerk. The clerk interviewed her and absolutely wanted to hire her. She's a great girl and had been with the county year and a half. Gracie turns in her resignation to the Treasurer's office as a part-time employee. ("Please accept this letter as my notice. I've had many good memories".... . You know, it was very nice.

Marty: Professional.

Beth Winters: Professional letter.... "This is my two weeks notice, my last day will be Friday, July 24th. I'm fully committed to a smooth transition." I mean very, couldn't ask for anything better right? After sending this to Felicity and myself and her supervisor April (who is the treasurer), she gave her notice on Monday, May 6th -- from that point forward, April, the Treasurer, did not acknowledge to me that I had given her my notice. I also sent April several emails that included all of my notes and any other information that she would need to help make that transition, again, none of those were acknowledged.

Beth Winters: Gracie said that I heard from another source that April told them that her and Chuck Poling were planning to come up with a way to try to terminate me before I could work out my notice, to try to stop me from being able to get another job in the county. Because Gracie's letter didn't say I'm going to the clerk's office -- it says this is my last day with you. She sent an email to April prior to my last day, making her aware that July 9th would be my last day because she felt like she had the anxiety. She felt like they were going to try to terminate her. She didn't want to be in that office and she was concerned. She did give her notice, but she didn't work at all. So Chuck came into the office in the morning, him and April (the treasurer) went into the backroom where there are no cameras to speak in private. After they were finished, Chuck then walked into the main area and out of the view of camera, because he knows where they are and he knows what he can say, motioned for me to come talk to him. Chuck said to me, 'we need to have a talk' and then grabbed me physically and around the shoulders and when I when I read this letter: something's going to stop and someone's going to stand up.

Marty: And you felt like you needed to protect her.

Beth Winters: Because she's this young 23-year-old girl that is living on her own, paying her bills, doing the right things and because she's quiet and reserved. I think that Commissioner Poling decided that he could try to manhandle the situation.

Marty: Have you spoken to this employee Gracie directly regarding this incident?

Beth Winters: I have. She came in on the 11th of July, I think, because she wrote this out, I asked her to handwrite it and hand it to me because she, she said I, you know, after she talked to me about it, I said if you're willing to write that down, I would appreciate it. I would ask that you handwrite it and do not email it because I feel like my emails are being watched. Not that anything, not that I would do anything that couldn't be seen, but you should have some sort of anonymity when you are making an HR complaint. And I don't feel that I have that. Gracie came in, brought me this statement and I, I didn't, I didn't, I didn't..... I feel like I have to do something.

Marty: Did Gracie feel intimidated by Commissioner Poling?

Beth Winters: Absolutely. She said she

Marty: How long did she talk to him? Did he try to talk to her?

Beth Winters: You know, I don't know that she mentioned that.

Beth Winters: It was quite a while. She did say that he stated if Mike Scott, when Mike Scott, if Mike Scott gets in after the first of the year, he will want to put his people into that office and that Mike Scott may not keep me around, she says. Chuck then said in a threatening way, If I don't finish out my notice, I'll not be able to be rehired in the county. Well once our conversation was over, Chuck once again grabbed me around the shoulders and guided me to the main office area. The whole interaction felt as if it was April having Chuck say that those things to me that were untrue to try to intimidate and scare me into changing my mind on the decision that I made. I was very uncomfortable that I was taken into a room by myself with Chuck Poling without my boss or another person present where there were no cameras, as if it felt as if this was intentional on both their parts. I feel it's 100% intentional.

Marty: OK. And Mike Scott is someone running for the Clerk's position?

Beth Winters: He has been, he was elected in the May primary and he is unopposed for November. So he will be the next clerk. So he will then be Gracie's supervisor. I was told yesterday by the current clerk that one of her employees had asked Mr. Poling if their jobs were safe. Because when you have, you know, a change of elected official, you expect that, there is some some change that could happen. And her statement was that Commissioner Poling said, I haven't told Mike that he has to fire anybody yet. Commissioner Poling, also with Gracie situation, so the county is under a hiring freeze instituted by the Grant County Council, and in March (the council meets once a month). In March, the current clerk came and requested to fill the second deputy in the clerk's office and that was approved 7 to 0. Part of Commissioner Poling's complaint was that that position was not approved by the council, so that position was never allowed to be hired for. It's just it was approved in March, but then there was an election to prepare for and the clerk didn't get around to hiring until just this month. But it was approved in March and was advertised on the county website. And I have those minutes where that was approved and where the hiring freeze was a resolution put in and 21st of May of 2025.

Marty: Have there been other incidences where you think that Commissioner Poling has intimidated or threatened people?

Beth Winters: So let's go with Emily. Emily is once again a young, very positive employee in the Assessor's office. Umm, there were a couple situations where Commissioner Poling came into the Assessor's office, Uh. Hold one moment, get my notes here so I'm, its hard to keep them all straight. Umm, in March of this year, uh, Commissioner Poling went into the Assessor's office to check and see if they needed anything. Umm kind of asked if they, you know, if the department ordered paper in bulk instead of with other offices and umm, and he said, you know, maybe if you guys ordered paper in bulk, you know, joining with other offices, then we could get you a raise. And then he started talking about the jail in that particular conversation. Four days later, Tuesday, March 24th, Commissioner Poling, Ed Hartman, who was at the time running for commissioner to replace against Ron Stewart. Chuck, Ed Hartman, Mike Simmonson, the maintenance director, and Sammy McMullen, also a maintenance employee, who is also a part-time deputy in the Sheriff's Department, (he has a little badge that he wears on his belt) and I should maybe rewind that just to kind of set the stage: Mike and Sammy are very often utilized in any employee termination situations to help assist to keep things level and to help assist to make sure that when that employee is terminated that they are escorted out of the building.

Marty: Right, for security purposes.

Beth Winters: Correct. And everyone knows that that they are pretty much the "enforcers" of that termination. So they, Commissioner Poling was showing Ed Hartman around the buildings, showing him around the offices. And mind you this is a month and a half before the primary election. Ed Hartman is not already elected. He has not won anything at this point. He is just a candidate. He is however, on a couple of, he is on the Area Planning Commission. So he is a board member, but not a, know not an elected official as of yet. So in another office, when this group of four men walk into the room, someone said, wow, are we getting fired because.

Marty: Two of them were the two people that would do this.....

Beth Winters:You know kind of saying it in jest but you know not really sure what's going on. But after that, they go to the Assessor's office where Emily works and they walked up to the counter and Commissioner Poling introduced Ed Hartman; that was, you know, this is Ed Hartman, He's running for commissioner and asked Emily about

voting. And she said, well, I only vote in the presidential elections. I don't in the locals. And then Emily said that Chuck comes into my bubble, meaning into her personal space, too close to her, and said to me, well, if you want a raise, you will vote for that guy. And then she says he also said something about the jail again while he was in my bubble, but I can't remember a lot of that was going on because she was a little bit off, off of off kilter.

Marty: And this was in the Assessor's office – were cameras there in that spot?

Beth Winters: Yes, and I do have that recording.

Marty: Is there audio or just it's visual?

Beth Winters: It's both. And again, Commissioner Poling knows where he can go and how loud he can talk because it didn't catch when he walked into her bubble so much. You can hear it, but it is much quieter. But he said some.....

Marty: Can you hear him say you'll get a raise if you vote for Ed Hardman?

Beth Winters: And then you, let me rephrase that. I believe so it's been since March. So I, I know that you can hear him say, well, you need to vote because I served in the Army and fought for your right to vote. And he said something about "butt" like I, I, I, I served in the Army for your butt. So you better go vote, something to that effect. Again, I do have the recording.

Marty: And she didn't remember a lot of the discussion of the jail. What about the jail? What's the issue there?

Beth Winters: So when Shane and Chuck ran for office, the jail project process was started way before Shane and Chuck got into and it had started at a very high price. Like I feel like it was \$120 million way before me. And Shane and Chuck thought that that \$120 million was way too much for jail.

Marty: And this would be for a new jail?

Beth Winters: Correct. So the council, you know, back and forth, you know, jail planning, jail discussion back and forth. The council came and said, kind of said, look, we're not going over \$60 million if we have to build a new jail, this is-- this is \$60 million. So they got him down to that. So there was, you know, anytime you have a huge capital expenditure, tempers are going to flare. And you know, people don't want you to spend money. People want you to spend the money the right way. Lots of, you know, lots of back and forth, lots of political capital there. So Shane and Chuck ran on not building a new expensive jail. And this is where I believe that Shane, that Commissioner Poling feels that Shane flipped or, you know, if you're not with me, you're against me, because Shane, Commissioner Poling Commissioner Middlesworth went to a went to tour a new jail that the same company that we were working through this process with had built a new jail in Hancock County. And he saw this nice facility that had room for rehabilitation and programming and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Marty: And better technology.

Beth Winters: Yes, yes. How you could run a jail with less employees because you have the, the way it's set up, you have the ability to see, you know, in cameras and things, whatever. So, so you could save money on manpower because you have the

technology. And Commissioner Middlesworth said, look, this is pretty good. This is a pretty good setup. This could be really good for us in the long run. And our jail was built sometime in the 80s or 90s, might be one of the oldest still operational jails in this state. So that is what Commissioner Poling has referred to quite frequently that Commissioner Middlesworth has flipped. So and from the very get go, like in my conversation with Commissioner Poling in January in the conference room incident, you know, he said, you know, listen, we don't want Ron. Ron doesn't do anything for the county. He's never here. He doesn't do things you need to vote for Mr. Hartman. You know I my vote is my decision. I have the ability to make that and I will make an informed decision when I pull the lever. So you know, I will nod with you and agree with you and say thank you for that information.

Marty: Right. So in January, when that encounter you had in the conference room with him, he was exhorting you to vote for Hartman at that point.

Beth Winters: Yes. And I feel like that this because not only did Commissioner Poling bring Mr. Hartman into the complex on most every floor, except for the third floor, because he doesn't like anybody on the third floor, which includes the surveyor, the Recorder's office and the veteran's office. He went to every floor and tried to introduce, show him around, brought him up to the 6th floor, showed him where Ron sits because you know, that'll be your office. Kind of. I don't know that that was said, but that was the the feeling that I got.

Marty: And this was on working time during the workday when people are working and trying to get.

Beth Winters: Work lunchtime- ish was when the incident with with Emily happened, but definitely during time that.

Marty: Working hours.

Beth Winters: Yes, that the maintenance employees could have been doing maintenance, not ushering the commissioner and his friend around, right?

Marty: Well, and when they are introducing to other to workers and people in the in the building, those, those workers are on the clock and they're at work.

Beth Winters: Right.

Marty: OK. What other, umm, incidences are you aware of that Commissioner Poling has made threatening comments or tried to intimidate county workers?

Beth Winters: So the Treasurer's office, umm, prior to, uh Gracie leaving, uh, Delaney Zech umm, Delaney has been with the county for about 10 years. And Delaney worked for the previous treasurer, obviously.

Marty: And before April,

Beth Winters: before April, yes, her name was Tiffany. I need to make a note because I will forget something if I don't. Excuse me, umm, Delaney, umm, applied for very similar situation, applied for a job in the Assessor's office that was Delaney was already full time, but Delaney applied for a job in the Assessor's office that constituted a \$9,000 pay cut to go to an office that was not the Treasurer's office. Delaney did this because she didn't feel like the current treasurer was treating the employees right, that the current treasurer was not doing things correctly. The Treasurer has told me specifically

that I can't know what the people in my department, what their tasks or their specific jobs are to do due to the separation of duties. As as a director of a department, you need to know all the functions of your department. You don't need to do them on a daily basis. But if you know, if the Mack truck incident happens and someone gets ran over by a Mack truck, your office can't stop perpetuating motion just because you lost an employee or someone's sick or alone on vacation. Someone needs to be able to pick up that ball and run with. But April says specifically that she cannot know how to do those jobs because State Board of Accounts says she can't. So Delaney again had worked for previous treasurer. Delaney had went to conferences with the previous ...

Marty: for training...

Beth Winters: ... with the previous treasurer... Delaney had a folder binder of notes that she had taken. How to do my job, how to do things like tax sale, where you work with the Assessor and the Auditor and you work with all of these departments on how to do things, notes that Delaney has taken herself. Delaney has, so she gave all of that information, copies of all of that to the girl sitting in the desk next to her because the girl sitting in the desk next to her was going to be responsible for the duties that Delaney previously did. (I gave you my notes), I'm going to keep my binder because I (1), I got this., this is my binder and it's got my notes in it and I'm taking it., So I'm thinking the trend in in my position, I'm thinking the transition is fine, you know, no problem. The Assessor gets a hold of me and says, April, (the Assessor's name is Rhonda) Rhonda says the treasurer will not give me Delaney's employee file. So another one of those things that this is the way the things have always been done in the county. In my mind, in every job I've ever been in, the employee file, the master employee file was kept in HR. It's not that way here.

Marty: OK, so the HR files are kept within the individual departments.

Beth Winters: Let's just call those departmental files, OK? Umm. But remember, don't trust Beth and Felicity because they don't know what they're doing so.

Marty: So then the.,.,

Beth Winters: Previously I think there wasn't an HR person at the county until about 8 years ago. So previously the way things have always been done is each department had kept their own employee records. OK, not the way I want it, but it's really hard to break down a brick wall. So I go down to the Treasurer's office and say, hey, could we get a copy? Not even asking for the whole thing, I said could we get a copy of the employee file for Delaney? Because her new supervisor needs to know, for instance, how many vacation days she has, how many you know, right, if there's any issues, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I don't know emergency contact info, whatever, whatever you would might find in an employee file. She says no. I said, excuse me. She said, well, Delaney took county property with her. I said she just went up three floors. She's still in the county, she said. But she took she took that folder of notes on how to do her job and she should have shared that. And I said why? I'm pretty certain she gave copies to her coworker, she said, but she took the binder and that's county property. OK, Again, she's still in the building. County still has it, right? It's not like, you know, it's didn't disappear, right? So I said, OK, fine. I walked away and I went and talked to Delaney. I said, Delaney, what's in this folder? Why? What is so worth? You know? She said, it's just my notes, my handwritten notes on, you know, if a handout was given at a conference, I made handwritten notes on it. It's in my binder. It's just how to do things.

Marty: Right.

Beth Winters: Is it like proprietary information? Is there something in there that nobody else would have known? She goes everybody with that was at the conference got the same information. So I'm like, OK, well, it shouldn't be any big deal. Then I said, and I, I did ask, I said, Delaney, could you give me a copy of it so I could give it to April? And she said, why? I gave all the information to Morgan. So it's still in the treasurer's office, right? And I said, OK, I, I can appreciate that. I understand that. Beth Winters: Great. I think Rhonda sent two different emails asking for the employee file and no response was ever given. None. No acknowledgement, no response. So again, just like Gracie's situation when Gracie turned in her notice, there was no response from the treasurer. Same thing happened when Delaney turned in her resignation in two weeks notice, there was no response given from the treasurer. No, no words. Hey, let's transition this. Hey, let's. It's just like, I'm, you know, you're quitting, so I'm not speaking to you anymore. Very childlike. So then I get this frantic call from Rhonda, the Assessor. And Rhonda says, is it true? And I said it was what true? Because at this point, I'm you never know.

Beth Winters: And she said, is Chuck going to fire Delaney? And I said, how's Chuck going to fire Delaney? Delaney works for you. You're the elected official. You control your staff. Is there something that Delaney has done that warrants being fired? And Rhonda says, well, it's about that folder again, this folder.

Marty: It was already copied and given to somebody in the Department.

Beth Winters: Right. So I said no, Rhonda, Chuck Poling and April cannot fire your employee. Your employee is fine. As long as your employee has done everything you know for the transition that she could have done, your employee is fine. So the next thing I hear, I never saw any of this, but I am told by Rhonda that like next day or next couple days that Chuck and April have retained an attorney or getting an attorney to file charges of theft against Delaney for this folder that didn't ever go anywhere. I didn't ever see that, but I feel like that was more, you know, a scare tactic.

Marty: Intimidation.

Beth Winters: Intimidation, again. But never, It never went further than that.

Marty: OK, and when did all that stuff take place?

Beth Winters: Bear with me. I'm gonna say that that was April and May.

Marty: Of this year?

Beth Winters: Uh, it was this year and I can get you those dates.

Marty: Umm, are there other examples of him trying to intimidate or threaten county employees, either himself or others?

Beth Winters: So there was this. Can we take a break?

Marty: Yeah, let's go off the record for a moment and take a break.

Marty: I'm going to cease the recording here. 02:06:18 Marty: It's about 11:09, OK AM. 02:06:21 Marty: We'll take a 10 minute break.

11:09AM