

11:41am

Marty: I'm going on the record with Delaney Zech and my name is Marty Lemert. I am interviewing her today on July 29th at approximately 11:41 AM. Thank you for meeting with me today. Written complaints have been filed with county human resources concerning Commissioner Chuck Poling and the manner in which he interacts with others in the county government workplace. I am an attorney and 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 that currently have been identified as having potential 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 disclosures otherwise advisable or required by law. As part of this investigation, Commissioner Poling will be given an opportunity to be interviewed and respond to the allegations. You are not the subject of this investigation. Commissioner Poling is the subject of this 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 department director who will inform the county legal department. This interview is being conducted during normal business hours 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 e-mail or phone to provide that information. This interview is being recorded so I can prepare the most accurate report possible. Again, today's date and time are 11:20 or July 29th, and it's about 11:44 AM. Can you state your name and spell it, and your position with the county, please?

Delaney Zech: Yes, Delaney Zech, Grant County Assessor's office.

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

Delaney Zech: It will be 10 years next week.

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?

Delaney Zech: Not towards me, no.

Marty: OK. Have you observed it towards others?

Delaney Zech: Yes.

Marty: OK. Why don't you tell me about that?

Delaney Zech: Just situations that most commissioners don't put themselves in. He inserts himself in. I know he, and when I put my notice in in a different office, he would frequent the office and go to the backroom with my old boss.

Marty: And who is your old boss?

Delaney Zech: April Laguerre.

Marty: And what position does she have?

Delaney Zech: She is the Grant County Treasurer.

Marty: OK. And how long did you work in the Treasurer's office?

Delaney Zech: 9 1/2 years.

Marty: OK. And so for the last six months or so you've worked in the Assessor's office?

Delaney Zech: Yes. I started there February 9th.

Marty: And you observed Commissioner Poling in the backroom with the Treasurer. How often?

Delaney Zech: It would be just random times and I don't know dates, times. I just— which they're back there talking. She's the elected official. That's— but just what followed with another employee within the Treasurer's office. That happened to her.

Marty: What happened to her?

Delaney Zech: He took her to the backroom. April and he, April and Chuck were talking. April came back up. I don't know if he got this employee or if the employee was told to go back there, but it was just the employee and Chuck back there, and it makes me— she's— it makes me wonder if it wasn't intimidation towards this employee because he never said, he never questioned why I was leaving, tried to get me to stay, but he did with this employee who's not as— I've had this mouth all my life and it's got me into a lot of trouble and she doesn't.

Marty: Right.

Delaney Zech: So it makes me wonder why he said something to her in the backroom but never questioned as to why the chief deputy would leave after 9 1/2 years in the Treasurer's office.

Marty: OK. And you put your notice in and you said in February of 2026?

Delaney Zech: It would have been— I can tell you exactly when— let's see, I started February 6th was my last day, so January 23rd is when I put my two weeks in.

Marty: OK. And did you work out your two weeks?

Delaney Zech: Yes.

Marty: Why did you leave the Treasurer's department?

Delaney Zech: I— my team before April worked really hard to get the Treasurer's office in good standing and it started to unravel and it was time for me to go.

Marty: OK. You mean the prior Treasurer was working hard to get the Treasurer's office in good shape? And why did the prior Treasurer leave?

Delaney Zech: Couple different— politics, Chuck.

Marty: You think she left because of Chuck?

Delaney Zech: I know she left because of Chuck. Yeah.

Marty: What did she say to you about it?

Delaney Zech: She wouldn't work alongside him because of prior run-ins with Chuck and her dad who was a sheriff at the time. Not at the time when Tiffany was Treasurer, at the time ...

Marty: ..... when her dad was sheriff...

Delaney Zech: ... correct....

Marty: OK. And she resigned her position 'cause she didn't want to work with Chuck Poling?

Delaney Zech: Correct. I mean, that was one of the reasons. I mean, politics, Chuck, and an individual named Malcolm Tanner were big ....

Marty: .....reasons...

Delaney Zech: .....reasons to leave. Yes.

Marty: Who is Malcolm Tanner?

Delaney Zech: He just caused a bunch of issues within the county and it was just like a tax sale thing, or commissioner sale, sorry. He just— that was her final straw 'cause she felt she wasn't protected with the whole Malcolm situation and she knew once he got elected there was going to be no protection.

Marty: So OK, and when April came in, why did you feel it was time for you to transfer departments?

Delaney Zech: She got power hungry.

Marty: Can you describe what you mean by that?

Delaney Zech: I don't want to— I humbly— I knew the office, I could run the office, and when she got comfortable in the position, it was chaos pretty much ensued. It was— she could do all this and she— you know, I can do the job of the Treasurer but really couldn't and then, which I'm the chief, that's fine, was then pushed on me. And then during a council meeting at the beginning of the year, she said I had no common sense, so I left.

Marty: She said that in the council meeting?

Delaney Zech: Correct.

Marty: OK. Are there anything— is there anything that was happening in the Treasurer's department that you felt was inappropriate or unethical in any way?

Delaney Zech: Just that she wasn't learning her job and still doesn't know the job, and so reports don't get done, things don't get balanced, and one penny can throw everything off and

you work hard to prevent that from happening and have a good reputation with the taxpayers, and it— you get someone that, my opinion is bipolar and some form of narcissistic, you can't work under that.

Marty: OK. And how much influence do you think that Commissioner Poling had over the Treasurer's office?

Delaney Zech: 100%.

Marty: Do you think that April was doing what he wanted her to do?

Delaney Zech: Yes.

Marty: Had you ever seen him giving her instructions on doing things or was this all in the back office?

Delaney Zech: It was all in the back office, or it would be, she would be on the phone somewhere with the door shut.

Marty: Did you ever have any personal interactions with Commissioner Poling during your time at the Treasurer's office?

Delaney Zech: Yeah, I mean, nothing— nothing bad. It was— we talked about God and church and there was never any bad— and I mean I wouldn't say bad. I addressed the safety concern of the Treasurer's office because they handled the county's money and there's large amounts at any given time and I addressed, you know, if something were to happen to me, my mom and sister are not going to be happy, so we need to get some form of safety at least for this office. Oh, we're working on it, we're working on it. Shortly after, the commissioners were approved to carry.

Marty: So only the commissioners can carry?

Delaney Zech: Yes,

Marty: Nobody else...

Delaney Zech: ... no. I mean it was shortly after I addressed the safety concerns.

Marty: And was that— what do you think, that's a solution to your safety concerns?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: Why not?

Delaney Zech: Not with someone that is a hot head to have a gun, no.

Marty: Right.

Delaney Zech: My dad's a hot head and he's not allowed to have guns anymore.

Marty: Yeah, and Commissioner Poling, are you describing him as a hot head?

Delaney Zech: Yes.

Marty: Why do you describe him that way?

Delaney Zech: I've witnessed it growing up, so I can spot a hot head.

Marty: OK. But he hasn't actually had a blow up with you personally?

Delaney Zech: No. He knows my family, so he knows that again, this mouth will not— he can't push me around, essentially, and he knows it.

Marty: Right. So have you observed him ever blowing up at anybody else?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: OK. When did they approve, the commissioners approve the commissioners to carry in the building?

Delaney Zech: I don't remember, I mean, it— I could look it up and give it to— it was voted on, in other words?

Delaney Zech: Yes.

Marty: Umm, have you ever had any interactions with Commissioner Poling outside of work that you considered inappropriate or concerning?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: Have you ever— do you believe Commissioner Poling has ever spied on you or your coworkers or have you— followed or anything like that?

Delaney Zech: The cameras.

Marty: OK. What about the cameras in the—

Delaney Zech: .....in all the offices, but definitely in the Treasurer's office and I'm sure the Assessor's office.

Marty: OK. Are they cameras that are— do they have audio with them?

Delaney Zech: Yes.

Marty: What's the justification for that?

Delaney Zech: Well, originally the Treasurer's office got cameras because the Treasurer got threatened at the counter. That was the original— we first got cameras was for our safety, and that has since not been— and I have thought— which the camera only records for so long, but I have, because my mouth, I have voiced— excuse me, I have voiced— Treasurer's office got these cameras for safety, not to spy on us.

Marty: ...right...

Delaney Zech: ...and that's what it is— it's—

Marty: Why do you believe that you're being spied on?

Delaney Zech: I think Chuck wants the power and he wants to know everything that's going on with everyone, every situation.

Marty: OK. Do you— what evidence do you have that he is personally reviewing those cameras?

Delaney Zech: None.

Marty: OK. Has Commissioner Poling ever discussed with you your voting, voting choices or who you should vote for?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: OK. Has he ever discussed with you your religion or religious practices?

Delaney Zech: No. I mean, we've just— we have both discussed, you know, God, and it's not been are you this, are you this.

Marty: OK. Have you— has Commissioner Poling ever discussed a desire for the county to employ his wife...?

Delaney Zech: No.....,

Marty: ....to you. OK. Are you aware of him trying to hire or seeking to hire any other relatives or friends or associates at the county?

Delaney Zech: I think his daughter is part of the cleaning crew. I don't know that for sure.

Marty: OK, anyone else that you're aware of that he's trying to get hired at the county?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: Umm, have you ever observed him being, uh, looking like he was under the influence of drugs or alcohol during any interaction?

Delaney Zech: No.

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

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: Has he ever made any physical contact with you in any way?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: Has he gotten in your personal space in any way?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: OK. Have you seen him do those things to anybody else?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: What is your understanding of the situation involving the other employee in the Treasurer's department and how he treated her?

Delaney Zech: He intimidated her and tried to persuade her into staying because the two that were there at the time pretty much ran the office and so if two of the missing pieces, one of

them leaves, it's putting everything on one person's shoulders and it's not the elected official's shoulders.

Marty: Right.

Delaney Zech: So I think he was just trying to get her to stay, intimidate her to stay. From what she told me, it was once the new elected official came into the office she transferred to, she wasn't going to have a job, he's going to fire you or he's going to let you go.

Marty: And she— she told you she was told that by Commissioner Poling?

Delaney Zech: Yes. She texted me right after the...

Marty: .... conversation ...

Delaney Zech: .....came back from the backroom and she was petrified.

Marty: OK. Do you still have that text message?

Delaney Zech: Yes.

Marty: Can you— would you be willing to share that with us?

Delaney Zech: Uh huh,

Marty: Well, you can— we can send it later.

Delaney Zech: Oh, OK. Yeah, during that—that's OK, well you can read it if you— if you want to, if you can read it right now.

Delaney Zech: Oh yeah. Give me a minute— here we are. OK, so she's been gone— so longer text— OK, hold on— that's OK, getting closer— OK. Thursday, July 9th at 8:59: "Can you possibly say something to HR for me? I don't think I'll be able to get a way to go up there. April and Chuck talked and then Chuck made me talk to him alone and he was trying to get me to stay. Told me that the job isn't approved and shit. Not true. I put my foot down and said I'm not happy and I'm leaving. Then he said, 'Why?' Well, I at least have to work my two weeks because handbook says if I don't, they can't rehire me. Also, bullshit. I'm done after today but I just want HR to know what's happening. He tried saying council told him that position was never brought to them or approved. He's trying to scare me."

Delaney Zech: So I said, "When and where did he say this to you?" She said, "He made me go — he made me go to the back break room like 10 minutes ago," and that was at 9:15. "April doesn't have the balls to talk to me herself and made truck Chuck try to scare me out of leaving."

Marty: OK, I appreciate it. Umm, do you, if you can, and what we'll do is have you, umm, try and send that to us afterwards.

Delaney Zech: Yeah, you know, as the actual text, screenshot or whatever.

Marty: Has Commissioner Poling ever, for you, shut you in a room with himself and refused to let you leave or anything like that? OK.

Marty: Umm, has— was Commissioner Poling's conduct in the county government impacted your ability to work at all?

Delaney Zech: He makes me nervous. He makes me anxious.

Marty: Why?

Delaney Zech: He makes me anxious.

Marty: Why so ?

Delaney Zech: That he— because he's— he's a hot head and he has a temper and you never know what to expect from someone that—

Marty: is the fact that he can carry now in the building of a concern?

Delaney Zech: Incredibly. I might be able to see when they approve that just by searching through my text messages 'cause I texted the old Treasurer and said, "Well, this is pretty uncomfortable that Chuck is now allowed to carry," and I just voiced my concerns about safety...

Marty: ..... and you don't consider that, as we said, as safety?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: Like a thing that makes you safer?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: Have you provided any written statements or complaints to anyone regarding Commissioner Poling prior to today? And how would you describe the overall work environment at the county government for others and the morale?

Delaney Zech: Down. If you're not part of Chuck's goonies— or one of Chuck's goonies, but I think everyone's kind of on egg shells. No one knows what to expect with him.

Marty: Are there any other communications or incidences of a similar nature that you are aware of involving anyone else and Commissioner Poling other than your coworker that was in the Treasurer's department?

Delaney Zech: Unh Unh.

Marty: OK. Is there anything else you'd like to share, anything else you think we should need to know about that hasn't been discussed?

Delaney Zech: Unh Unh. .

Marty: Do— are there any other people who may have relevant information related to this?

Delaney Zech: I mean, Gracie, who he pulled to the backroom, would be ....

Marty: .....somebody.

Delaney Zech: ... uh huh

Marty: OK. Anyone else?

Delaney Zech: No.

Marty: All right, I don't— do you— do you, during your time in the Treasurer's office, have you — did you observe any financial handling of anything that you thought was unusual or shouldn't have happened involving Commissioner Poling?

Delaney Zech: OK.

Marty: I have nothing further at this time. I appreciate your time and if you— if you can get that text message to us, that would be great. If there's anything else that comes to light or that you think about, we'd be happy to have you reach out to us.

Delaney Zech: OK.

Marty: All right. I'm going to end the interview now. It's about 12:05 PM.

12:05pm