Subject: Re: Formal complaints received...
Date: Tuesday, April 1, 2025 at 4:11:33 PM Pacific Daylight Time
From: Heide Lambert
To: Heide Lambert

Dear Members of Waldport City Council,

I am writing in response to two letters that were sent to the city council by two employees of the City of Waldport. Each letter referenced me and my behavior, specifically on the afternoon of Tuesday, March 25, 2025, inside City Hall.
I have read both letters and feel concerned that my statements and demeanor, though misinterpreted, might have contributed to feelings of unease, and I apologize for not realizing this at the time. I also appreciate the opportunity to share my experience of the situation, in City Hall, on that day—including my thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

The letters mentioned above were written by Robin Morris, Office Manager, and Ellen Valentine, Finance Manager. Each letter includes descriptions and interpretations of my demeanor, tone of voice, and body language. In addition, both writers make inferences about my emotional state and what I was feeling, as well as assumptions about my intentions and knowledge of what was included in the mail that I picked up. While I want to be accountable for anything I may have said or done that caused either of these employees to feel "uncomfortable" or "Intimidated," I am baffled by the allegations and do not believe I was "aggressive." Nor do I think I violated the city charter.

Though I am not obligated to share this, it might be helpful for you all to know that on March 21, 2025, while shopping at Ray's, I was approached by a community member who informed me they had sent me, the mayor of Waldport, a formal letter of complaint about Dann Cutter, the city manager. This concerned me, as I was hoping to collaborate with all of you, as well as our legal counsel, on strategies to mitigate distress among community members. I decided to contact the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) to inquire about resources that we, the council, could access for support in a situation like this. I was advised to call Citycounty Insurance Services (CIS), which I did. I was able to consult with CIS attorney, Ross Davies, on the morning of March 24, 2025. He suggested that I go to City Hall and pick up my mail, then take the letter to the County Clerk and request it be scanned and sent, electronically, to all council members (including me) and the city attorney.

When I entered City Hall on March 25, 2025, my intention was to do exactly what Ross Davies suggested. I went to my mail box, and was surprised to find so many envelopes, all addressed to me, opened, and stamped "received" and "scanned." Some of them had "Private" and/or "Confidential" written on them by the sender. I looked through the pile searching for the letter I was expecting and was mystified that it was not among the others.

I did, however, fear that the letters included more complaints against the city.

I did not realize, as I do now that Ellen Valentine informed me, that it is the city's policy to open and scan all letters to council members—regardless of whether or not they say "Private" and/or "Confidential" on them—and I admit to being taken aback by that. In fact, I felt as though my privacy had been somewhat violated.

It is my recollection that, at this point, I approached the counter and spoke with Robin Morris who was sitting behind the protective, glass barrier. I showed her the letters in my hand and asked if they were forwarded to council members after they were scanned. She indicated that she didn't think so and that the city manager instructed Ellen Valentine to scan and forward them to him since the city recorder was out of the office on vacation.

To be honest, I was stunned when I realized community members' confidential complaints that were sent to the mayor, were not forwarded to the mayor or the council but directly to the city employee who I assumed the complaints were about. I foresaw this as another possible legal issue for the city, and I immediately set an intention to request guidance, again, from CIS. I also wondered why the letter I had come to pick up seemed to be missing. It was all very perplexing and I attempted to gather more information from both Robin Morris and Ellen Valentine, who had approached the counter, so I could properly relay the facts to CIS.

Ellen Valentine confirmed that Dann Cutter, the city manager, had directed her to scan the letters and forward them to him in an email. She then directed me to call him to express my concerns. Though, as I recall, her language was less professional than that and somewhat abrasive which I found unsettling and disrespectful. Still, I tried to comprehend the situation which was so far from what I had anticipated and I asked, again, if she would forward the letters to the members of city council. She then told me that our conversation was over and that if I have any issues, I needed to call Dann Cutter. At which point, I informed her that I intended to bring my questions to the attorney, rather than the city manager, and I left the building.

I was baffled at what had just happened, and I attempted to make sense of it all. Had I received the email that was sent from the city manager to the city council, prior to entering City Hall on March 25, 2025, I would have been less surprised to find that bunch in my mailbox. But unfortunately, that email was not delivered to my Inbox until the morning of March 26, 2025. While sitting in my car, I found myself experiencing conflicting concerns and emotions. I was concerned for myself, the city manager, the members of the community who thought they were confiding in their city council, and the city of Waldport.

Our city is currently experiencing a social crisis, at the very least. Whether their concerns prove to be valid, or not, the truth is that members of the community are upset with the city

manager and frustrated with the city council. I heard some of the concerns during my campaign, and was aware that if elected, I would need to collaborate with all of you, Dann Cutter, and city staff in an effort to prevent legal and financial burdens on the city. I met with Dan Cutter and council member, Greg Dunn, in early March to learn about our legal counsel protocol and brainstorm ideas to help mitigate law suits from community members and/or organizations. Unfortunately, I walked away from that meeting with more questions and concerns.

As I reflect on my experience in Waldport City Hall on March 25, 2025, I know for a fact that I was not experiencing any feelings of anger or hostility toward either Robin Morris or Ellen Valentine. I appreciate and value their contributions to the city of Waldport. It was never my intention to "demand" anything of either of them. Nor did I. I simply needed clarification, support, and help, and I apologize if my shock, confusion and concerns prevented me from communicating that more effectively. The culture of collaboration that I had experienced in my previous term on the city council appears to have shifted and it is taking me some time to adjust.

I hope we can move forward so we can all work on the important issues confronting the city of Waldport.

Sincerely,
Mayor Heide Lambert

BCC:
Megan Torres, City Recorder
Dann Cutter, City Manager
Greg Dunn
Rick Booth
Jayme Morris
Susan Woodruff
Michelle Sevenson
Jerry Townsend
Macpherson, Ginter, Diaz Law Office, City Attorney