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| LawsuitMarch 23. 2022I’ve written this column for over eight years, and I have always tried to keep things positive.  Unfortunately, I can’t do that this week. I have to respond to the lawsuit that Commissioner Hehn has filed against Josh Ward, our town manager.At last Thursday’s town board meeting I expressed disappointment that Mr. Hehn had filed a personal lawsuit against Josh. It wasn’t against the Town of Highlands, the mayor, nor the town board. It was against Josh Ward.  Filing a personal lawsuit against a town employee, especially by a town elected official, is a bad precedence.  It is simply unacceptable if the community wants to have a functioning government.  I can’t understand why the commissioner took such action, except to coerce and intimidate Josh Ward.  Josh has three children. One is about to start college, another two in elementary school.   As a parent Josh faces of years of financial obligations. As a town manager he is under constant pressure to deal with town issues. The last thing Josh needs is a town commissioner suing him in Macon County Superior Court for an action he was doing under the direction of the town board and mayor.  In a previous letter to Josh marked confidential, Mr. Hehn demanded that Josh privately pay him for attorney fees that Mr. Hehn incurred in his quest to see broadband documents.  These documents were part of a nondisclosure statement that the town board had signed with WideOpen Networks.  Mr. Hehn was not on the board when this agreement was approved.He also contends in his filing that Josh did not provide him copies of the redline drafts that attorneys representing the town exchanged with Hotwire attorneys.  Josh, nor I, nor the board, nor the staff have these documents. These redline drafts are not public documents.  At the February board meeting commissioners voted 4 to 1 not to ask the attorneys for these documents. Commissioners felt there was no need for Mr. Hehn, or anyone else, to micromanage and second guess a finalized contract by scouring through multiple attorney drafts and notes.In his filings Mr. Hehn made several assertions that were incorrect. One was that Josh personally withheld the redline documents from Mr. Hehn. Josh simply followed the board’s directive.  I addressed other misleading filing statements at Thursday’s board meeting.It’s regrettable that Hehn is now attacking Josh with a lawsuit.  Josh was not intimided and refused to comply with Mr. Hehn's previous coercive letter. Now Josh is facing a new personal attack. I was gratified that the board of commissioners voted to pay for Josh Ward’s defense fees. I am not surprised that Mr. Hehn decided to file a lawsuit against a town employee. He has a history of filing lawsuits against government entities with whom he had been associated. But now he is making it personal.Josh is a good town manager and public servant. He is an honest and hardworking employee.  This situation sends a bad message to other town employees either comply with Commissioner Hehn’s directives or face a lawsuit.*PAT TAYLOR* |

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