

Members of the Grievance Committee,

For over a year now I have lived in fear of losing my job. Over that time the anxiety has grown increasingly overwhelming as my direct supervisor, Brandon Rogers, has consistently and unnecessarily harassed me over matters unrelated to my job performance.

In fear of greater abuse in the form of retaliation, I have reluctantly lived with his less-than professional behavior but finally decided to submit a formal grievance after an incident that occurred on February 15, 2023, in Brandon's office that left me shaken and emotionally spent. No one should be subjected to such abuse and disrespect. It is time that Brandon's behavior toward me was brought to light and, hopefully, that he be subjected to disciplinary actions deemed appropriate by this committee. I will describe that meeting shortly, but first, some important preliminary information and background.

I have filed my grievance under § 36.23 (C) (2) of the Pike County Personnel policy, which reads, ***THREATENING OR HOSTILE BEHAVIOR***. *Inappropriate, unprofessional or harassing actions causing an employee to feel intimidated or threatened in his or her workplace to the extent the employee believes his or her employment status may be unreasonably in jeopardy unless actions outside the scope of his or her job description are performed.*

I would like to note that this is technically a subsection of the county's sexual harassment policy, but that I am making no allegations or accusations of a sexual nature. However, it is the only section of the county policy under which hostile work environment is cited, and the verbiage perfectly describes Brandon's behavior toward me.

I will now demonstrate to this committee how Brandon's words and actions toward me clearly violate this section. I will also provide witness testimony that supports my claims. I would love to be able to provide other witness testimony, but since they report to and work with Brandon, doing so would place them in the position of fearing for their jobs so long as he remains county manager.

My official job description – provided to the committee - outlines my duties and responsibilities, among them: manage daily operations of the library in cooperation with the FRRLS – Flint River Regional Library System – policies and procedures; serve as key contact between public service and regional staff; supervise, train and evaluate staff in all aspects of library service; attend FRRLS manager meetings as scheduled; cooperate with FRRLS director in representing branch to the board and the public.

I am also guided by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that further clarifies the responsibilities of the county, FRRLS, and the library board. A copy of the MOU is provided to the committee. The MOU, conceived and drafted by county attorney Rob Morton, specifies the division of responsibilities between the three signers: the county commissioners, FRRLS, and the library board. As you can see, this division of responsibilities, while necessary for the proper management of the library as a part of the Georgia Public Library System, again places the position of library manager, my position, in a unique situation among other department heads. In fact, the library acts more as an authority than a department, the difference being that we, the library, are responsible to more than one supervising entity.

To repeat, *I cannot stress enough that these provisions place me in a unique position both personally and professionally.* While I clearly and without question report to the county manager, I am also required to manage the library according to standards set by both Pike County and the FRRLS. This requires that I adhere to and abide by policies and procedures ***not under the direction or control of the county manager.*** I submit that it is, based on my job description, impossible to ignore one over the other and properly perform the functions of my job as library manager.

I am also, to an extent, guided by the Pike County Library Board of Trustees, an advisory board overseeing the proper dissemination of library services for the citizens of Pike County. I meet quarterly with the board and am also directed by them beyond the scope of the county manager's oversight.

From our first meeting since he became county manager, Brandon has consistently expressed dissatisfaction with this arrangement. ***This despite no issues or concerns with the arrangement having been raised by the previous three county managers – and one interim manager - under whose tenure I have managed the library.***

Despite his knowledge of and familiarity with this arrangement, Brandon has repeatedly admonished me to ignore guidance, directives, and advice from both FRRLS and the library board. Members of the Committee, *this is in direct contradiction to my duties and responsibilities as listed in my job description.* It places me in an awkward and unenviable position: Being asked to act counter to those duties and responsibilities clearly requires that I – and I quote from the relevant section under which I filed my grievance – ***perform actions outside the scope of my job description.***

Whenever I have questioned his conflicting directives, reminding him of the unique nature of my position, Brandon has grown angry, visibly frustrated, and verbally abusive. This has happened numerous times and in the presence of others, including library board chairman, Anthony Vinson, and most recently in front of Brooke Gaddy, when he, among other things, asked, "Can the board fire you, Rosemary?" or "Can FRRLS fire you?" He has also told me that we should consider severing our relationship with FRRLS, and also that we did not need the library board.

Brandon is often sarcastic and abusive when addressing me. He has verbally attacked me, called into question my competence as a manager, and alleged that I was untrustworthy. He raises his voice, leans into my personal space, intimidates me, and makes me feel threatened to the point that I am no longer comfortable alone with him. I am equally uncomfortable with him in the presence of any other county employee who might also be intimidated or subject to retaliation.

Last year, during a meeting attended by library board chairman, Anthony Vinson, Brandon, after stating that he was probably going to "say things that would come back to bite him", grew verbally abusive toward me, saying that he did not trust me. During this meeting he aggressively gestured toward me with the point of a pen. He said that I had made him look bad in front of the commissioners at the 2022 department head retreat when I asked questions about the most recent draft of the proposed budget that I had received just the night before, and that this had "...caused me a great deal of trouble both at work and at home."

After the meeting, Anthony Vinson contacted the Board of Commissioners to report the incident. He informed them that in his opinion as a former corporate human resources manager, Brandon was not a

competent people manager. Mister Vinson subsequently discussed his concerns with the commissioners and the county attorney in an Executive Session and is prepared to testify to you about his experience with Brandon as well as his reports to the commissioners. Would the committee prefer to hear Mr. Vinson's testimony at this time or later?

This brings us to the meeting on February 16, 2023, when Brandon summoned me to his office for a meeting. At this point, due to his abusive treatment during previous one-on-one meetings, I requested that a third party be present. At Brandon's direction, Brooke Gaddy, the county human resources clerk, was present. Instead of the promised "meeting", Brandon ambushed me with an unexpected formal written warning accusing me of unsatisfactory performance, insubordination, and failure to communicate. (Copies provided to the committee) These charges were unfounded and insulting and I refused to sign the disciplinary form, leading Brandon to become angry and abusive despite Brooke's presence and continued to pressure me to sign the form.

It was Brandon's contention that I had failed to follow his instructions about participating in interviews to fill vacant positions at the library. As I will show, this was unfounded. I feel that I acted in good faith to adhere to his instructions at the time, and that I did nothing wrong or rebellious. The library was short-staffed, and my sole focus was to quickly fill the available positions with the best available candidates and build a strong team of staff members to serve the needs of our patrons.

In the wake of this meeting, chairman Vinson again wrote to the commissioners reiterating his concerns about Brandon's apparent lack of empathy and leadership. My detailed notes of that meeting have been provided to the committee, and I will now read them into the record.

For the past year at least, I have walked on eggshells, trying to appease Brandon while at the same time adhering to the provisions of my job description and responsibilities to the FRRLS and the library board. He has argued that my behavior has been insubordinate, but it has not been my intention to be combative or rebellious, only to properly perform the requirements of my job with personal and professional integrity. Have I minimized my face-to-face contact with Brandon? Yes, I have, but certainly not to the extent that I have failed to keep him properly and completely informed of library operations. I have done so solely because of his past behavior toward me. This has caused me no end of anxiety.

During recent annual budget discussions, Brandon became more antagonistic when I, and the library board, questioned his motives for violating the Memorandum of Understanding, or MOU, as drafted by the county attorney and signed by representatives of FRRLS, the library board, and the board of commissioners.

After the library board's most recent meeting, attended by Brandon, the members of the library board wrote to the commissioners detailing their belief that Brandon was working toward diminishing the role of the library by rewriting the MOU to his favor, severing our relationship with FRRLS, and dismantling the library board. Despite being asked to do so in writing by the board, Brandon has declined to address this allegation. A copy of the letter from the board to the commissioners is provided to the committee. Mr. Vinson, as chairman of the library board, is available to answer any questions you may have about the letters content.

On April 10, Brandon again summoned me to his office for a meeting to discuss a recent employee injury that occurred at the library on March 28. I asked that board chairman Vinson attend as my advocate. Brandon refused and offered to have Brooke Gaddy attend. After the events of the previously described meeting, and since Brooke reports directly to Brandon, this was unacceptable to me. I replied to Brandon in an email, "Considering that Brooke's presence in our last meeting did little to abate the situation, I do not feel safe without the presence of my board chair and am respectfully requesting that Anthony be allowed to attend this meeting." Again, Brandon refused. I contacted the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, Briar Johnson, but he was too far away to make it to the meeting, so I contacted District 4 commissioner James Jenkins, who agreed to drop what he was doing to make the meeting.

At this meeting Brandon once again ambushed me with a second writeup, this one once again for unsatisfactory performance, insubordination, and failure to communicate. This citation is groundless and unsupported by evidence or specific policy. In fact, it is easily refuted and proven false. The accident occurred while I was attending a BOC meeting. When the meeting broke for an executive session, I hurried to the front of the room where Rob Morton was the only officer remaining, the others, including Brandon, having already left the room. At that point I reported the accident to the county attorney, so in my mind had made proper notification.

This was within minutes of being notified by the employee. The next morning, I arrived at work and at 10:00 began the process of interviewing the employee and completing the incident report. I made several calls to both Brandon and Brooke but didn't leave messages for either of them. In Brandon's office I asked, for future reference, where I might find the appropriate procedures for reporting an injury. He was unable to answer. A copy of the written warning is provided to the committee, and commissioner Jenkins is prepared to testify about his observations during the meeting.

Members of the Grievance Committee, I believe that we have demonstrated that Brandon Rogers did indeed create and foster a hostile work environment as per the relevant section of the personnel policy as cited. He has bullied me and kept me in a constant state of anxiety by making me fear that unless I go against the provisions and requirements of my job description and the MOU, that my employment is at risk. His behaviors and actions have been reported to the commissioners several times over the past year, but to my knowledge no disciplinary actions have been taken. He has been allowed to continue and the lack of oversight appears to have empowered him.

I ask that this committee review the evidence and narrative and then recommend that the county manager be appropriately admonished and disciplined per the County Personnel Policy. I would also request that this committee recommend that, so long as he is county manager and I report to him, no meeting will take place between me and Brandon without one of the county commissioners present and supervising Brandon's behavior toward me. I would also request that any such meetings be recorded and archived.

If it is within the scope of this committee's authority, I would also ask that you strongly recommend that the Board of Commissioners launch a full investigation of Brandon's activities as county manager,

particularly regarding his treatment of subordinates and constitutional officers, especially women. It is incomprehensible that I alone have been the target of his anger, hostility, and retaliation.