



City of Lauderhill

City Commission
Chambers at City Hall
5581 W. Oakland Park
Blvd.
Lauderhill, FL, 33313
www.lauderhill-fl.gov

File Details

File Number: 24R-5475

File ID: 24R-5475

Type: Resolution

Status: Agenda Ready

Version: 1

Reference:

In Control: City Commission Meeting

File Created: 01/02/2024

File Name: Public Censure Denise D. Grant

Final Action:

Title: RESOLUTION NO. 24R-01-19: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAUDERHILL, FLORIDA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE PUBLIC CENSURE OF COMMISSIONER DENISE D. GRANT; FINDING THAT COMMISSIONER DENISE D. GRANT'S BEHAVIOR WAS UNACCEPTABLE AND UNBECOMING OF A PUBLIC OFFICER; PROVIDING THAT ALL PERSONS, SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING CITY STAFF, SHOULD BE VALUED AND TREATED WITH PROFESSIONALISM, CIVILITY AND RESPECT; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Notes:

Sponsors:

Enactment Date:

Attachments: RES-24R-01-19-Public Censure Grant FINAL AMENDED 1-22-24.pdf, Ex. A-Cummings Complaint.pdf, Ex. B-Crooks complaint.pdf, Ex. C AMENDED Investigative Report - 12.05.23.pdf

Enactment Number:

Contact:

Hearing Date:

* **Drafter:** apetti@laudershill-fl.gov

Effective Date:

History of Legislative File

Ver- sion:	Acting Body:	Date:	Action:	Sent To:	Due Date:	Return Date:	Result:

Text of Legislative File 24R-5475

RESOLUTION NO. 24R-01-19: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAUDERHILL, FLORIDA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE PUBLIC CENSURE OF COMMISSIONER DENISE D. GRANT; FINDING THAT COMMISSIONER DENISE D. GRANT'S BEHAVIOR WAS UNACCEPTABLE AND UNBECOMING OF A PUBLIC OFFICER; PROVIDING THAT ALL PERSONS, SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING CITY STAFF, SHOULD BE VALUED AND TREATED

WITH PROFESSIONALISM, CIVILITY AND RESPECT; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Request Action:

A Resolution approving and adopting the Public Censure of Commissioner Denise D. Grant. Finding that the behavior was unacceptable and unbecoming of a Public Officer. Providing that all persons, specifically including city staff, should be valued and treated with professionalism, civility, and respect.

Need:

Public Censure of Commissioner Denise D. Grant

Summary Explanation/ Background: The Florida Statutes and Broward County Code contains provisions regarding codes of conduct for public officer. While the City of Lauderhill currently has a code of conduct for candidates for public office contained in Section 8-10, it does not currently have a standard of conduct or code of ethics for public officers and was encouraged to adopt such a code specific to public officers with clearly designated penalty provisions as a result of the recent investigation involving Commissioner Denise D. Grant. The City also does not currently have an anti-bullying policy and was encouraged to pass such a policy applicable to all employees as well as public officers. The City Charter Section 3.07(b) provides that city commissioners should not deal directly with city employees or staff, but should instead consult with city officers and employees solely through the city manager. On October 8, 2023 a formal written complaint was filed by Commission Aide to the Mayor, Khya Cummings, voicing concern regarding the existence of a hostile environment that was being created and maintained by Commissioner Denise D. Grant as it related to her Commission Aide, Stephanie A. Crooks. Ms. Cummings noted that she had personally witnessed some alleged offensive treatment by Commissioner Grant towards Ms. Crooks. On October 9, 2023, Stephanie A. Crooks submitted her own written complaint (which included a transfer request), based on alleged harassment, verbal abuse, and hostility by Commissioner Grant. On October 11, 2023, a public meeting was held to advise the City Commission of the formal complaints received against Commissioner Grant and requesting direction thereon. The majority of the City Commission voted to hire an independent consultant to thoroughly investigate the above-referenced complaints, and instructed the City's outside labor and employment counsel, Weiss Serota Helfman Cole and Bierman, to retain the. Consistent with the Commission's directive, Weiss Serota independently engaged Ria Chattergoon, Esq., of RC Law Group to conduct the independent investigation. The results of the investigation determined that, while the complained of behavior did not meet the legal requirements to establish a claim of harassment or a hostile work as defined by federal or Florida law, there was evidence of unprofessional and inappropriate behavior and a potential risk for a claim of retaliation under the Florida Whistleblower Act with regard to both Ms. Crooks and City Clerk Andrea Anderson. The investigative findings indicated that there is a pending Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) investigation regarding Commissioner Grant and there was "a clear timeline and/or chain of retaliatory events beginning around the time the FDLE investigation commenced in April/May 2023 and after Ms. Crooks participated in the FDLE investigation." The investigative findings also indicated that "the facts as described and confirmed with a multitude of witnesses, including Commissioner Grant, establish that Commissioner Grant's alleged performance issues with Ms. Crooks began after the FDLE investigation and after Commissioner [Grant] suspected who the potential witnesses to that investigation were. The investigative findings further indicated that "the overwhelming responses from all employees

interviewed indicate that they do not feel respected or valued when working with or for Commissioner Grant. On December 14, 2023, a public meeting was held at which Ms. Chattergoon, reported these investigative findings to the City Commission. In response to the findings, the City Commission instructed city administration and legal counsel to: conduct training for all city commissioners; implement citywide policies prohibiting bullying behavior; create a code of ethics for public officers which contains express penalty provisions; and prepare a Resolution calling for the public censure of Commissioner Grant. Commissioner Grant was provided with seven (7) days from the date of her receipt of Ms. Chattergoon's investigative report to file a rebuttal to the findings contained therein and, as such, the directive that was issued by the City Commission with respect to actions to be taken by administration and legal counsel was contingent upon the receipt of a rebuttal from Commissioner Grant in order to determine if there was the need to change any of Ms. Chattergoon's investigative findings. The rebuttal period expired on December 20, 2023 and Commissioner Grant's legal counsel confirmed that she did not intend to file a rebuttal, and no rebuttal was in fact submitted to the city. Given that no rebuttal was filed, Ms. Chattergoon did not change any of the findings in her report; however, Ms. Chattergoon did make a slight amendment to the report to correct a factual error that she was made aware of in order to clarify that it was City Manager Desorae Giles-Smith who had arranged the meeting between the Police Union and Commissioner Grant following the Unity in the Community event, and not the Police Chief who had arranged the meeting as originally stated. On December 21, 2023, Ms. Alison Smith of Weiss Serota forwarded this final amended investigative report dated "December 5, 2023*" with a footnote explaining the amendment to the Human Resources Department as the final investigative report. The City Commission finds that a public censure of Commissioner Grant for the behavior referenced in the investigative report is in the best interests of the citizens and residents of the City, and that the adoption of this Resolution demonstrates to the City and its professional staff that the conduct and behavior exhibited by Commissioner Grant is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Attachments:

Public Censure

Cost Summary/ Fiscal Impact:

Include projected cost, approved budget amount and account number, source of funds, and any future funding requirements

Estimated Time for Presentation:

Master Plan:

Goal 1: Clean, Green Sustainable Environment

- Increase mass transit ridership
- Reduce City energy consumption
- Reduce water consumption

Goal 2: Safe and Secure City of Lauderdale

- Crime in lower 50% in Broward
- Residents feel safe in neighborhood
- Reduce emergency fatalities

Goal 3: Open Spaces and Active Lifestyle for all ages

- Increase participation in youth sports
- Add new park land and amenities
- Increase attendance at cultural programs and classes

Goal 4: Growing Local Economy, Employment and Quality of Commercial Areas

- Increase commercial tax base Increase employment in Lauderhill businesses
- Decrease noxious and blighted uses in commercial areas

Goal 5: Quality Housing at all Price Ranges and Attractive Communities

- Neighborhood signs and active HOAs Housing & streets improved, litter reduced
- Increase proportion of single family homes and owner occupied housing

Goal 6: Efficient and Effective City Government, Customer Focused & Values Diversity

- Improves City efficiency Increase use of Information Technology
- Increases residents perception of Lauderhill as an excellent place to live