

As many of you may be aware, the City Manager released a statement on Friday concerning the results of an independent investigation into sexual harassment in the police department. I received multiple questions from residents seeking clarification, and in some instances, more information. Below are some questions where I could provide answers after consulting with our City Attorney.

What exactly is being investigated in the City, and by who?

Complaints of sexual harassment and financial improprieties in the police department. Two independent firms were retained by the City to complete these investigations. The firm investigating the allegation(s) of sexual harassment concluded its work and reported back to the City with findings and recommendations. The letter distributed by the City Manager last Friday addresses this investigation to the extent possible. The investigation into potential financial improprieties uncovered by the City Manager and her Finance Director last year is ongoing. The two investigations are not related; both just surfaced about the same time.

What did the City do when it found out about these allegations?

When these allegations were brought to the attention of City management, the City Manager put all interested parties on paid administrative leave after consulting first with the Mayor and Council. Thereafter, the City hired one independent firm to investigate the complaints of sexual harassment complaints, and another independent firm to conduct a financial investigation. The former completed their work. We are still waiting on the latter to complete theirs. The City Manager took appropriate action based on the findings of the sexual harassment investigation - i.e., where, after consultation with the City Attorney, Mayor, and Council, she felt she could discipline individuals without violating their due process rights, she did. Please know that, under state law, some employees retain more due process rights than others. As a result, administrative action may occur sooner for some, later for others. There may also be additional action taken against more individuals once the financial investigation is complete.

The State Assembly of Maryland (like other state governments) protects the privacy of public employees. As a result, we are not trying to avoid transparency in providing limited answers, but protecting the City from legal liability. Those involved in these allegations are not public politicians. These are public employees with privacy rights, and we must respect those rights or we risk putting the City in legal jeopardy.

Outside of the administrative action referenced above, what more are we doing?

We will continue to provide sexual harassment training (which the City was providing prior to these allegations surfacing), and make sure all staff feel their office place is a safe space to report these types of claims. We are also in the midst of a nationwide search for a new Police Chief who can identify how to improve our police department to better serve you.

As always, feel free to email me at lchesek@mountrainiermd.org with any questions or to schedule a time to talk.