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**IN THE MATTER OF SPOKANE POLICE DEPARTMENT  
RESIGNATION OF CHIEF FRANK STRAUB**

**INTERVIEW OF**

**KAREN STRATTON**

**TAKEN ON  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016  
1:52 P.M**

**SPOKANE COUNTY  
1116 WEST BROADWAY AVENUE  
SPOKANE, WASHINGTON 99260**

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1 INTERVIEW OF  
2 KAREN STRATTON

3 TAKEN ON  
4 WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016  
5 1:52 P.M.  
6

7 THE REPORTER: The time is now 1:52 p.m. We are  
8 on record.

9 MS. CAPPEL: So, Karen, I'm going to introduce  
10 myself just because I do it with all of my interviews, but  
11 we have met before

12 MS. STRATTON: Yes.

13 MS. CAPPEL: But I'm Kris Cappel with the Seabold  
14 Group. We've been retained by the City of Spokane to  
15 investigate a number of issues related to the departure of  
16 former Police Chief Frank Straub. I've asked to meet with  
17 you today and you've agreed to meet with me to tell me what  
18 you know on the various issues that have been authorized and  
19 are within the scope of the investigation I've been asked to  
20 conduct.

21 And the -- for full disclosure, you were on the  
22 joint committee that was overseeing my work --

23 MS. STRATTON: Correct.

24 MS. CAPPEL: -- for a period of time, but you've  
25 recused yourself because you are now a witness in the

1 investigation.

2 **MS. STRATTON:** Correct.

3 **MS. CAPPEL:** Karen, you see that we're recording  
4 the interview to assist the court reporter. Do I have your  
5 permission to record this interview?

6 **MS. STRATTON:** You do.

7 **MS. CAPPEL:** Great. One thing that I tell  
8 everybody that I meet with is that my role in this  
9 investigation, I know I don't need to tell you this, but  
10 just to make clear, is as a fact finder. I'm an attorney  
11 but I wasn't hired as an attorney and I won't be giving any  
12 legal advice.

13 The other thing I tell everyone is that because of  
14 the interest in this investigation within the community and  
15 elsewhere, it's clear that your statement will be disclosed  
16 and become a matter of public record, either through a  
17 public records request or through litigation that's been  
18 filed. So I want to make sure everyone is fully aware of  
19 that inevitability

20 Having said that, do you have any questions before  
21 we get going?

22 **MS. STRATTON:** No. I don't think so.

23 **MS. CAPPEL:** All right. Let's start with -- it's  
24 my understanding now that you were a City employee before  
25 you became a Council member.

1 MS. STRATTON: Correct.

2 MS. CAPPEL: So let's talk about your experiences  
3 as a City employee. So if you could just take me through  
4 when you were hired and the positions you held.

5 MS. STRATTON: I was hired in July of 2005 as the  
6 Senior Advisor to then Mayor, Jim West. I worked with him  
7 through his recall and at the end of that time period was  
8 hired as the Public Information Officer for the Spokane  
9 Regional Solid Waste System. Worked there for two-and-a-  
10 half, three years, and then took a leave of absence to work  
11 for Mary Verner who was the next mayor. And worked in her  
12 office until she was not successful in her re-election. At  
13 that point, moved back to my job with the Spokane Regional  
14 Solid Waste System. And that's --

15 MS. CAPPEL: Do you remember what year that was?

16 MS. STRATTON: Two thousand -- 2011-2012.

17 MS. CAPPEL: And was your position a civil service  
18 position?

19 MS. STRATTON: In the Mayor's office it was  
20 management professional. And as I -- my title with the  
21 Spokane Regional Solid Waste System, it was manager-  
22 professional, but it went through civil service.

23 MS. CAPPEL: So your position was subject to the  
24 civil service rules?

25 MS. STRATTON: Yes. Yes. I had to test for it

1 and went through all that.

2 **MS. CAPPEL:** So you're back in solid waste in  
3 around 2011-2012. What was the next move in the City?

4 **MS. STRATTON:** My next move after that -- I did  
5 not remain in that department very long and I moved to the  
6 clerk -- office of the city clerk as a Clerk III.

7 **MS. CAPPEL:** So let's talk about the circumstances  
8 that led to you leaving the position in solid waste and  
9 going to the clerk's office. What happened?

10 **MS. STRATTON:** I -- under civil service rules, I  
11 had bumping rights, which meant I was -- when Mayor Condon  
12 was elected, he brought in his own staff so I was without a  
13 job, and I could go back to my civil service position. And  
14 I had the seniority in that position. So I exercised my  
15 right to bump the employee who had taken my place.

16 Went back into the office and it was not made  
17 known to me that she had been retained as a project  
18 employee. So we had me taking my job back and the person  
19 who I had taken the job from in a pretty small office. She  
20 had not taken the transition well and the office environment  
21 became pretty hostile.

22 **MS. CAPPEL:** And what did you do to try and  
23 address that?

24 **MS. STRATTON:** I immediately -- when I knew it  
25 just wasn't going to work, I started calling around the

1 City, people that I knew to see what kind of positions would  
2 be open. I put myself on transfer lists. Talked to civil  
3 service quite a bit about what other jobs I might be fit  
4 for.

5 **MS. CAPPEL:** Did you consult HR?

6 **MS. STRATTON:** I did and was told that there were,  
7 you know, not positions available but to work through civil  
8 service, so I did that. And got pretty frustrated with the  
9 lack of -- especially people knowing that it was a hostile  
10 work environment, that the lack of any kind of involvement  
11 from human resources as far as, number one, we've got to  
12 protect this employee. Let's get her somewhere where she  
13 can -- you know, even temporarily work and not have to be in  
14 these circumstances.

15 **MS. CAPPEL:** So let me stop you there. Who were  
16 you communicating with in HR?

17 **MS. STRATTON:** I finally communicated with Gita  
18 Hatcher who was an HR analyst

19 **MS. CAPPEL:** Had you talked to anyone in HR before  
20 Gita?

21 **MS. STRATTON:** Heather Lowe knew about it and I  
22 don't remember if I was talking to her directly or if there  
23 were other discussions going on about this situation. A lot  
24 of people were talking because people were trying to help me  
25 get out of there.



1           **MS. CAPPEL:** Do you remember talking to Heather  
2 directly and sharing with her how you were feeling, that you  
3 were working in a hostile working -- a hostile work  
4 environment?

5           **MS. STRATTON:** No. I was told that I had to fill  
6 out a complaint first, that there had to be a complaint  
7 filed. And I finally -- because I knew Gita, I finally  
8 called Gita and said will you talk to me and sit down and  
9 let's go through this. And so Gita worked really closely  
10 with me, making sure that, you know, I knew what my rights  
11 as an employee was and that I got the information filled  
12 out.

13           **MS. CAPPEL:** Do you remember who told you that you  
14 had to file a formal complaint in order for your concerns to  
15 be addressed?

16           **MS. STRATTON:** There were two people, one was Gita  
17 Hatcher and I've talked about her. And the other person was  
18 -- I can't remember his name. He was a clerk in the HR  
19 department and I had talked to him about it. Can I find his  
20 name and get it --

21           **MS. CAPPEL:** Yeah. We can look -- we can --

22           **MS. STRATTON:** Yeah.

23           **MS. CAPPEL:** -- deal with that after.

24           **MS. STRATTON:** They were aware that there was a  
25 problem but as it was explained to me is that they really

1 couldn't do anything until a complaint was actually filed.

2 **MS. CAPPEL:** Okay. So you're -- you're meeting  
3 with Gita and she's helping you through this process. What  
4 -- what ends up happening?

5 **MS. STRATTON:** So I end up filing a complaint. The  
6 legal department decided to do an independent investigation  
7 into my claims because I had claimed that there was a  
8 workplace -- hostile work environment resulting in, you  
9 know, loss of income for me and, you know, having to change  
10 jobs. So they did an independent investigation and I was  
11 able after a fashion to see the -- you know, the results of  
12 that investigation, which were substantiated, my -- you  
13 know, my claims that it was hostile and there were issues  
14 with the employees in that department.

15 **MS. CAPPEL:** Did you have to ask to see the  
16 report?

17 **MS. STRATTON:** I did. We were anxious to see it  
18 because I wanted to really kind of see -- it was the first  
19 time I would have seen everybody's comments together, the  
20 people -- myself and then the other employees that were  
21 involved. And, in fact, I think that I did send an email to  
22 Heather Lowe asking, you know, when that was going to be  
23 done and if I could see it. And in a roundabout way, after  
24 a couple times of calling Erin Jacobson, I was told that  
25 they had it. So I made an appointment to sit down and at

1 least go through and see this --

2 MS. CAPPEL: With Erin?

3 MS. STRATTON: -- report. With Erin.

4 MS. CAPPEL: Did they give you a copy of it?

5 MS. STRATTON: Eventually I did get a copy.

6 MS. CAPPEL: Okay. So tell me about your  
7 conversation with Erin.

8 MS. STRATTON: So when we talked about it, we went  
9 through and talked about what was going to happen. The  
10 report did indicate that there was hostile work environment  
11 and that the City had really violated our own policies.  
12 Because, you know, there was -- we do have a City policy  
13 against employees being harassed or disregarded in the  
14 workplace or disrespected, and nobody really did anything  
15 about it. So I had the report. I asked her what would  
16 happen next and she said there would be a meeting with the  
17 employees involved and their union reps to look at how to  
18 correct the behaviors and that that was their end, that's  
19 what they were going to.

20 And my concern was I had been an M&P union member,  
21 but now I was a Local 270. And I remember looking at Erin  
22 saying, so what do I get? I mean, do I get anybody to sit  
23 down and go through this and talk to me about what happened  
24 and how do we correct it. And she basically said I didn't  
25 because those employees had benefits through their unions

1 and I had -- I was kind of in between unions and that's when  
2 -- I said, well, then I will just file a formal claim  
3 against the City for the events that happened.

4 **MS. CAPPEL:** And you did file such a claim?

5 **MS. STRATTON:** I did file a claim.

6 **MS. CAPPEL:** And eventually did you settle that  
7 with the City?

8 **MS. STRATTON:** I did settle it with the City. I  
9 met with the -- one of the city attorneys and the claims  
10 rep, my lawyer and my husband and myself.

11 **MS. CAPPEL:** Okay. How would you describe your  
12 personal experience trying to get assistance from the City's  
13 HR department?

14 **MS. STRATTON:** It was humiliating. It was  
15 frustrating. It was tiring. It made me feel like I wasn't  
16 important enough to move forward and that, you know, so  
17 what, so you were treated poorly. Get over it. And I  
18 wasn't willing to do that because I didn't think that  
19 anybody should have to go through something like that.

20 **MS. CAPPEL:** Did you make an effort to meet with  
21 Heather Lowe to talk about your concerns and what you were  
22 experiencing?

23 **MS. STRATTON:** I had had -- there was one point  
24 where Erin Jacobson had set up lunch with Heather and myself  
25 and so I thought, that's good. We can sit down, at least

1 talk about what's going on. And this was before I left.

2 You know, this was just to say, look it, I'm in this mess,  
3 somebody's got to help me out.

4 **MS. CAPPEL:** So you were still at the solid waste  
5 --

6 **MS. STRATTON:** Yes.

7 **MS. CAPPEL:** -- department before you -- that was  
8 a demotion, by the way, wasn't it, to go to the city clerk's  
9 office?

10 **MS. STRATTON:** When I went to the city clerk's  
11 office, I demoted, yes.

12 **MS. CAPPEL:** So you took a pay cut?

13 **MS. STRATTON:** Yes.

14 **MS. CAPPEL:** And you were trying to meet with  
15 Heather to talk about it before you actually made the --

16 **MS. STRATTON:** Right. That I just needed to get  
17 somewhere else and that this was not a healthy thing that  
18 was going on over in solid waste. And so the lunch was set  
19 up. Went to lunch. Showed up at Twigs and Heather did not  
20 show up.

21 **MS. CAPPEL:** Do you believe that Heather  
22 understood why you wanted to meet with her?

23 **MS. STRATTON:** I believe she did.

24 **MS. CAPPEL:** And what makes you think so?

25 **MS. STRATTON:** Heather and Erin Jacobson -- I

1 mean, they work very closely together. Erin is the legal --  
2 the employment attorney with the City and Heather's the --  
3 the head of HR. So there's a lot of interaction there.

4 **MS. CAPPEL:** Was Erin the one that set up the  
5 meeting?

6 **MS. STRATTON:** Yeah, she set up lunch.

7 **MS. CAPPEL:** Did you ever hear from Heather about  
8 why she missed that lunch?

9 **MS. STRATTON:** No. I never heard from Heather  
10 during any part of this process.

11 **MS. CAPPEL:** Did you eventually get some kind of  
12 acknowledgement from Heather?

13 **MS. STRATTON:** When everything was said and done  
14 and we settled on -- we had a settlement, she sent me an  
15 email and apologized that I felt that she did not help me  
16 during the investigation -- or during the process.

17 **MS. CAPPEL:** Okay. Have you and Heather talked  
18 about it at all since then?

19 **MS. STRATTON:** No.

20 **MS. CAPPEL:** So when you trans -- you self-demoted  
21 to the city clerk's office, remind me about the time that  
22 that was.

23 **MS. STRATTON:** It had to be around -- let's see,  
24 Mayor Verner was not elected so it was 2011, so it would be  
25 2012. I remember -- yeah, it was 2012. And I was only back

1 in solid waste -- or Regional Solid Waste System probably  
2 January-February. I think I was pretty much done by the end  
3 of March.

4 **MS. CAPPEL:** Of -- I'm sorry, remind me of the  
5 year.

6 **MS. STRATTON:** So it would be 2012.

7 **MS. CAPPEL:** '12. And before I move on, I  
8 actually want to go back to the interactions you had with  
9 Gita when you were -- when she was assisting you. How would  
10 you describe your -- your interactions with Gita and her  
11 assistance?

12 **MS. STRATTON:** Gita was very honest. She was very  
13 encouraging. She -- you know, she was -- she was very  
14 honest in the fact that for anything to happen I had to file  
15 a complaint and that was going to be a difficult thing to  
16 do. And, you know, I have no complaints. She kind of stuck  
17 with me through it and helped me get the complaint filed and  
18 --

19 **MS. CAPPEL:** So you felt supported by Gita?

20 **MS. STRATTON:** By Gita, I did. Yes.

21 **MS. CAPPEL:** Okay. So once you moved to the  
22 clerk's office, what was generally your role and  
23 responsibilities?

24 **MS. STRATTON:** It was a Clerk III and we processed  
25 all public records request and I was also responsible for

1 developing the weekly Council agenda. So the advanced  
2 agenda and the current agenda items went on a format that  
3 you put together and got that done for City Council  
4 meetings.

5 **MS. CAPPEL:** With respect to public records  
6 requests, what was generally the process that was followed  
7 by the city clerk's office when you were there?

8 **MS. STRATTON:** They -- a public records request  
9 would come in either by email or people coming by the  
10 office, they had a form to fill out. Some people filled  
11 them out on line. They would come in -- they would be  
12 recorded or scanned and they -- we had five days to respond.  
13 So what would happen is public records requests would come  
14 in and you would automatically send a note to people saying  
15 we've received it and we'll respond within five days.

16 **MS. CAPPEL:** You mean to the person who filed the  
17 -- the notice --

18 **MS. STRATTON:** Yes. Yes.

19 **MS. CAPPEL:** -- or the request?

20 **MS. STRATTON:** And then it depended -- and I  
21 didn't handle -- the clerk and the deputy clerk handled the  
22 big requests. I had, you know, regular requests from  
23 construction companies wanting, you know, construction data  
24 for, you know, the week before that was just -- you sent out  
25 every week. But they handled the more important, bigger



1 ones that came in that were going to take a lot of time.

2 **MS. CAPPEL:** Did you learn how it was the city  
3 clerk's office determined who to forward the request to, who  
4 were the people who -- people or departments who likely had  
5 responsive records?

6 **MS. STRATTON:** Yeah. And they usually would  
7 either talk to legal, the legal department if there was one  
8 -- if there was question. A lot of times, you know, if  
9 somebody wants records for any communication from the  
10 director of streets to the neighborhood -- neighborhood  
11 councils.

12 So you kind of know that you've got to start with  
13 the street department, the director, and then you've got to  
14 go to neighborhood services and include those folks.

15 But a lot of time the clerk and deputy clerk  
16 would, you know, search out and ask either legal or other  
17 departments who else should this go to. They're really  
18 thorough about trying to make sure they got those requests  
19 to the right people.

20 **MS. CAPPEL:** So it was not unusual to involve  
21 legal in the -- the early stages of responding to the  
22 requests?

23 **MS. STRATTON:** Not at all. Yeah. Especially if  
24 it was a big enough issue and there were records that had to  
25 be redacted, you know, with addresses and social security

1 numbers and that kind of thing.

2 **MS. CAPPEL:** Who in the -- who makes the decision  
3 as far as you understood about redactions and exemptions?

4 **MS. STRATTON:** The -- as -- from what I remember,  
5 Terri Pfister was very -- very good about getting a legal  
6 opinion first. And, in fact, I remember code enforcement  
7 complaints were big ones. And they would come in and it  
8 didn't look like much, but there was a lot of information on  
9 those code enforcement forms that people filled out. And so  
10 Terri was really good about going back to legal and saying  
11 do we need to -- does this information need to be redacted  
12 and so much so that there were times, you know, after I'd  
13 been there awhile it was, well, we're not going to redact  
14 this because we no longer have to, I checked with legal, the  
15 state saying we don't have to redact addresses or whatever.

16 **MS. CAPPEL:** Okay.

17 **MS. STRATTON:** So that was a pretty close  
18 relationship between the clerk's office and legal.

19 **MS. CAPPEL:** And was there particular lawyers in  
20 legal that she would usually work with?

21 **MS. STRATTON:** Usually, Mike Piccolo was the one  
22 that I recall her working the most with. Sam Faggiano and -  
23 - you know, and it depended, you know, James Richmond's a  
24 lawyer. He handles land issues. So if there was something  
25 with land, she would talk to him.

1 MS. CAPPEL: Okay.

2 MS. STRATTON: So I think it --

3 MS. CAPPEL: It varied.

4 MS. STRATTON: Yeah.

5 MS. CAPPEL: While you were in the clerk's office  
6 was there an occasion where you ran into Carly Cortright and  
7 learned that she had transferred from police to City Hall?

8 MS. STRATTON: Yes.

9 MS. CAPPEL: Do you remember about when you  
10 learned that?

11 MS. STRATTON: It had to be -- it had to be when  
12 she first came over to City Hall because I hadn't seen her  
13 in awhile and she was at the clerk's desk needing some  
14 information. I remember saying what are you doing here, and  
15 she says, I'm working here now, in City Hall. And the way  
16 she explained it to me, she said -- and it was kind of, you  
17 know, flippantly, you know, I went on vacation and I came  
18 back and I didn't have a job. And I've been over here in  
19 special projects. So it was whenever that time frame put --  
20 puts her back into City Hall as an employee in the City Hall  
21 building.

22 MS. CAPPEL: So you thought it was a recent  
23 transfer?

24 MS. STRATTON: Yeah. It was -- she had come back  
25 -- this had happened pretty close to when I talked to her.

1 MS. CAPPEL: The transfer was close in time to the  
2 --

3 MS. STRATTON: Correct.

4 MS. CAPPEL: -- conversation you --

5 MS. STRATTON: Yes.

6 MS. CAPPEL: -- had with her?

7 MS. STRATTON: Yes. Yes.

8 Ms. CAPPEL: And did she say anything about or comment  
9 on the circumstances of her departure?

10 MS. STRATTON: The only thing she said to me --  
11 because I knew how much Carly loved what she did in the  
12 police department, she'd been there awhile. And so I  
13 remember saying to her, you know, what are you doing here,  
14 what happened? And she -- do you want me to --

15 MS. CAPPEL: Yes.

16 MS. STRATTON: She said -- she looked up at me and  
17 she said, "The Chief is fucking crazy." And she kind of  
18 laughed and she said, "I truly think he's bipolar." And  
19 that she was moved and that she was going to be working out  
20 of City Hall. She didn't give any specific examples, but  
21 definitely I was -- I was aware that there had been problems  
22 and that the Chief was --

23 MS. CAPPEL: Was that the first indication to you  
24 that there was any kind of personnel conflict at the police  
25 department?

1 MS. STRATTON: That was the first time. Yeah.

2 MS. CAPPEL: And did Carly at any point share with  
3 you any additional details about her experience working for  
4 Straub?

5 MS. STRATTON: She did not. The only thing that I  
6 was aware of was that she was moved from City Hall in a city  
7 position in the Mayor's office for special services,  
8 whatever they called it, but that the police was -- the  
9 police department was still paying her salary.

10 MS. CAPPEL: And did that seem normal to you?

11 MS. STRATTON: No.

12 MS. CAPPEL: Did you inquire about it?

13 MS. STRATTON: I did. I ran into -- and I wasn't  
14 on the Council at the time, but I ran into Council President  
15 Stuckart going across to lunch and, you know, asked, and  
16 said I don't understand why are we -- why is the City paying  
17 -- or why is the police paying a salary that isn't working  
18 for the police department there in the -- under special  
19 events, and he didn't know.

20 MS. CAPPEL: Ben didn't know?

21 MS. STRATTON: Ben didn't know. No.

22 MS. CAPPEL: Did you inquire any further on why  
23 that arrangement had been made?

24 MS. STRATTON: I -- I inquired later as a Council  
25 person in a study session with the police chief and his

1 administrative staff.

2 MS. CAPPEL: Okay. We'll get to that.

3 MS. STRATTON: Okay.

4 MS. CAPPEL: You eventually left the employment of  
5 the City?

6 MS. STRATTON: Yes. I left the employment of the  
7 City when I was appointed to the City Council.

8 MS. CAPPEL: And that was when?

9 MS. STRATTON: September of 2014.

10 MS. CAPPEL: And you've been on the Council since  
11 September of 2014?

12 MS. STRATTON: Yes.

13 MS. CAPPEL: Between the time you were appointed  
14 to the Council and -- actually, let me -- let me back up.

15 Once you became a Council member, did the subject  
16 of Chief Straub's management style or his relationships with  
17 his senior staff come up as an issue in Council?

18 MS. STRATTON: From what I recall, no. I mean, I  
19 know that there -- I knew that there had been something  
20 going on because of Carly being moved. The Chief was never  
21 necessarily warm or fuzzy with me, but it hadn't been, to me  
22 -- what I was hearing was that there weren't a lot of issues  
23 that I was hearing about.

24 MS. CAPPEL: So you were not hearing that there  
25 were a lot of personnel or senior staff was complaining

1 about Chief Straub?

2 MS. STRATTON: No.

3 MS. CAPPEL: Did you at some point learn that  
4 Monique -- you know Monique Cotton?

5 MS. STRATTON: I know who she is.

6 MS. CAPPEL: Did you learn at some point that she  
7 was transferring from the police department to the parks  
8 department?

9 MS. STRATTON: Yes.

10 MS. CAPPEL: Do you recall the earliest that you  
11 learned that?

12 MS. STRATTON: I learned while she was moving into  
13 the office over at parks. I had employees that were  
14 concerned that she had been -- she had been moved into an  
15 employee who was on sick leave, and she'd been moved into  
16 her office. So that's when I kind of realized that there  
17 was actually a body coming from police to work in parks.

18 MS. CAPPEL: You hadn't seen any kind of formal  
19 announcement that Monique was transferring to the parks --

20 MS. STRATTON: No.

21 MS. CAPPEL: -- before those employees --

22 MS. STRATTON: No.

23 MS. CAPPEL: -- talked to you?

24 And the Mayor and Theresa hadn't brought that up  
25 as a personnel move with Council?

1 MS. STRATTON: Not that I recall.

2 MS. CAPPEL: Would that be unusual for them to  
3 discuss those kind -- that kind of personnel move with the  
4 Council?

5 MS. STRATTON: I don't know if it would be unusual  
6 but it -- they never have in the time that they've been in  
7 their positions. People are moved all the time and we don't  
8 know about it or we don't hear about it.

9 MS. CAPPEL: And is that something that you would  
10 expect to hear about or not so much as a Council member?

11 MS. STRATTON: Well, I would have -- and I think  
12 the reason we took interest in it is because once we  
13 realized that she was still being paid from the police  
14 department. It was one thing to say we're moving or we're  
15 bringing on this employee, and then when you ask the  
16 question who is paying her, and you find out that it's still  
17 the police, I think that's what kind of heightened  
18 everybody's interest in it.

19 MS. CAPPEL: And how did you learn that the police  
20 department was still paying her salary even after she moved  
21 to parks?

22 MS. STRATTON: There was, of course, discussion  
23 around City Hall about it, but we had a study session with  
24 public safety, study session with the police and  
25 administration, and I specifically asked him --



1 MS. CAPPEL: "Him" being Straub?

2 MS. STRATTON: Straub about the move and he said,  
3 yes, that she had been moved to parks. And I said, "And  
4 she's still being paid out of police?" He said, "Yes." I  
5 said, "How long is that going to be?" And he said, "Oh, as  
6 long as parks" -- something about as long as parks -- if  
7 that's what they want to do. None of it was very clear. It  
8 wasn't -- nobody offered any better explanation of why she  
9 was being moved.

10 It was -- and I had also mentioned Carly  
11 Cortright, that isn't this the same thing we did with Carly  
12 Cortright, and we had police paying for a position at City  
13 Hall. He said, yeah, he thought so. And was just kind of  
14 nonchalant that she would be -- it left me to believe that  
15 Monique would be in parks as long as Leroy Eadie or the  
16 powers that be wanted her there.

17 MS. CAPPEL: Was the question ever posed to Mayor  
18 Condon about the circumstances of Monique going to parks?

19 MS. STRATTON: Not -- I didn't discuss it with him

20 MS. CAPPEL: And did he offer any explanation  
21 outside of your discussions with the police chief about  
22 Monique being transferred to parks?

23 MS. STRATTON: No.

24 MS. CAPPEL: How about Theresa, any discussions  
25 with her about --

1 MS. STRATTON: No.

2 MS. CAPPEL: -- the circumstances?

3 Before you had -- that study session that you  
4 referenced, when did that occur?

5 MS. STRATTON: Oh, I'm terrible. I don't know. I  
6 mean, it was shortly after Monique got there because  
7 everybody was talking about it. It was shortly after she  
8 was moved to parks.

9 MS. CAPPEL: Okay. And closer in time to when she  
10 actually moved than to, say, when Chief Straub left the  
11 City?

12 MS. STRATTON: Yeah. It was closer in time to  
13 where she was moving -- she was there. I mean, she had  
14 furniture. She had established an office. She was there.

15 MS. CAPPEL: And was there any other explanation  
16 given to you about the circumstances of her transferring to  
17 parks?

18 MS. STRATTON: No. I think that everybody assumed  
19 that it was to pick up the -- the load from Nancy Goodspeed  
20 who was out on sick leave, that -- you know, that she might  
21 be helpful in parks.

22 MS. CAPPEL: And did you have an understanding of  
23 whether Nancy intended to come back to work?

24 MS. STRATTON: Nancy did intend to come back to  
25 work, yes.

1 MS. CAPPEL: Okay. And she did come back?

2 MS. STRATTON: She did.

3 MS. CAPPEL: All right. Let's talk about how did  
4 you learn and when did you learn that there were serious  
5 concerns that had been raised by Chief Straub's senior staff  
6 that the Mayor intended to address?

7 MS. STRATTON: It was during an executive session  
8 -- or executive -- yeah, executive session of the City  
9 Council. Executive session is held after our briefing on  
10 Mondays at 3:30. We have a briefing and then if we need to  
11 go into executive session, we do. And usually those are  
12 reserved for legal issues, anything that we need time  
13 together as a Council, if the attorney's in there or whoever  
14 to talk about issues.

15 MS. CAPPEL: That includes personnel issues?

16 MS. STRATTON: Correct. And it was at that time  
17 that the Mayor and Theresa Sanders were there. They had a  
18 letter. They were holding a letter. They explained to us  
19 that they had gotten letters from the Mayor's -- the police  
20 captains and lieutenants and his executive staff and that it  
21 -- it reflected his management style that was abusive and  
22 they had complaints about it.

23 MS. CAPPEL: Did he show you the letters?

24 MS. STRATTON: Yeah, he was -- they were standing  
25 in front of the room so they had the letters and we were

1 able to see them later, but it was made very clear that they  
2 brought up some very serious concerns about how the Chief  
3 was managing the department and obvious that there were big,  
4 big concerns about it. And that they were going to meet  
5 with the Chief. They had talked to him by phone and they  
6 were going to meet with him the next morning.

7 **MS. CAPPEL:** Did they -- did the Mayor or Theresa  
8 say what they planned to do?

9 **MS. STRATTON:** No. And it -- my perception was I  
10 left there thinking they would talk to him in the morning  
11 and either map out a plan to correct the behavior or to  
12 verify the information and to have a plan moving forward or  
13 -- you know, and there was a possibility that, you know, he  
14 would be -- he's an at-will employee, so he could be, you  
15 know, fired. But I -- I left that thinking that there were  
16 discussions still left to have with the Chief.

17 **MS. CAPPEL:** And was there any further discussion  
18 or questions asked of the Mayor and Theresa before the  
19 meeting broke?

20 **MS. STRATTON:** Yes. Because we had heard so much  
21 within City Hall about Monique Cotton and there were rumors  
22 and people talking about it constantly, I did ask the  
23 question if it had anything to do with Monique Cotton and  
24 was told no.

25 **MS. CAPPEL:** And what was -- you were asking

1 whether -- when you say "it" had anything to do with Monique  
2 Cotton, what are you referring to?

3 **MS. STRATTON:** When they were talking about, you  
4 know, they had concerns from the upper staff and the  
5 captains and lieutenants, my mind didn't go to abusive  
6 language, my mind went to Monique Cotton. So that was the  
7 "Does this have something to do with Monique Cotton?"

8 **MS. CAPPEL:** And that was because of rumors that  
9 you had heard?

10 **MS. STRATTON:** Right.

11 **MS. CAPPEL:** Were you -- before the Mayor and  
12 Theresa shared the existence of the letters and described  
13 them as abusive management style, had any of -- had that  
14 come to your attention as a Council member that his staff  
15 thought he had an abusive style?

16 **MS. STRATTON:** Not necessarily, I mean, his  
17 administrative staff they always seemed, you know, when we  
18 would have meetings, especially public safety meetings once  
19 a month, so we would see them and they seemed to be -- they  
20 seemed to work together fine. And then once in a while you  
21 would hear that he -- he had a hot temper or, you know, he  
22 would, you know, get upset about something and yell at  
23 somebody, but to the extent that was in the letter and that  
24 has since come out, no.

25 **MS. CAPPEL:** Okay. Had any members of the police

1 department sought out -- sought you out to talk -- confide  
2 in any problems they were having with Chief Straub?

3 **MS. STRATTON:** I'm trying to think. No.

4 **MS. CAPPEL:** And you said you met once a month, as  
5 the public safety committee, met once a month and so you  
6 were on that committee?

7 **MS. STRATTON:** Yes. All Council members sit on  
8 that.

9 **MS. CAPPEL:** Okay. Who from the police department  
10 would usually attend those besides Chief Straub?

11 **MS. STRATTON:** So it would the Chief, it would be  
12 Tim Schwering, who was his -- I don't even know what his  
13 title was but he was always there. Rick Dobrow was there.  
14 He ended up filling in after the Chief was gone. And it  
15 depended sometimes if it was -- you know, if we were talking  
16 about cop shots and drug issues, it would be the detective.  
17 The other detective that would show up quite a bit was  
18 Detective -- or Captain Arleth.

19 So it was really depending on every month we dealt  
20 with different issues and different contract items that the  
21 police had to get. They had to brief us before it came  
22 before Council. So it usually depended, but the main group  
23 was the Chief, Tim Schwering. There was another gentleman  
24 who has since retired, and Captain Arleth or, you know, one  
25 or two of the captains.

1 MS. CAPPEL: Okay. And it looked like the team  
2 was working --

3 MS. STRATTON: Yeah.

4 MS. CAPPEL: -- well together --

5 MS. STRATTON: Yeah.

6 MS. CAPPEL: -- as far as you could tell?

7 Were there any issues that came to the Council's  
8 attention about the constant reorganizing of his department,  
9 moving a lot of staff around and doing it a number of times?

10 MS. STRATTON: Well, that kind of got to be a joke  
11 because it was every -- every other month that something was  
12 different, people were changing. I think the first time I  
13 really had to take a second thought -- a second look at it  
14 was when he had Craig Meidl and there was one other person  
15 who moved up to work with him and they actually demoted  
16 themselves because they -- they did not want to work those  
17 kinds of hours. So I remember thinking that was odd.

18 MS. CAPPEL: Was that what you were told was that  
19 they self-demoted because of the hours?

20 MS. STRATTON: Yes. And they have families, you  
21 know, they have young families and I think it was hard on  
22 them to make those kinds of adjustments.

23 MS. CAPPEL: Did you learn of any other folks that  
24 were self-demoting?

25 MS. STRATTON: I think there were a couple with

1 Craig Meidl. I think that's it.

2 MS. CAPPEL: Was that any kind of red flag for you  
3 that --

4 MS. STRATTON: It wasn't --

5 MS. CAPPEL: -- senior staff self-demoting?

6 MS. STRATTON: Yeah, I mean, it's a red flag but  
7 when you -- you know, I mean, when you have that kind of  
8 flex or that kind of change, it just seemed -- you know, you  
9 trust the people that are in charge and you hope that the  
10 reorganizations are going to work. But it really did get to  
11 be kind of a "What day is it? Oh, the police department is  
12 going to reorganize."

13 MS. CAPPEL: Okay.

14 MS. STRATTON: And I was -- I was concerned more  
15 on the level of exempt positions because with all of these -  
16 - and it's happened inside City Hall when all of these  
17 divisions and departments reorganize it -- a division  
18 director or department director gets two exempt positions  
19 and where I care is that it takes away from those civil  
20 service employees. So I was always kind of watching to see  
21 if we were losing civil service employees as a result of  
22 these -- or how top heavy we're getting with exempt.

23 MS. CAPPEL: Okay. At some point you learned that  
24 Chief Straub resigned?

25 MS. STRATTON: The -- yeah, I think it was the



1 next day.

2 **MS. CAPPEL:** And how did you learn that that was  
3 happening?

4 **MS. STRATTON:** I came into the council offices  
5 early and there was a press conference I believe and --

6 **MS. CAPPEL:** Was it in progress?

7 **MS. STRATTON:** I think they were planning it. I  
8 don't remember that but I know it was Ben Stuckart and -- I  
9 don't know if Ben was part of it. Anyway, it was a press  
10 release that he had -- he was gone. He had resigned.

11 **MS. CAPPEL:** And had there been any communication  
12 with you in between the executive session and when you  
13 learned of the press release saying that Straub was going?

14 **MS. STRATTON:** No.

15 **MS. CAPPEL:** How did you react?

16 **MS. STRATTON:** Well, it was kind of -- you know,  
17 again, I think -- sometimes I'm pretty naive. But I was  
18 just kind of -- I didn't think it would happen that fast,  
19 just knowing HR, knowing that I was an employee that had  
20 issues once that there's a process. So I just thought that  
21 there would be an investigation and I knew about the  
22 letters.

23 I knew about the accusations. And I thought,  
24 well, surely this has got to run its course. You have to do  
25 the -- it goes through a process before you decide to get

1 rid of somebody. I mean, I know that he was an at-will, but  
2 I -- logically in my brain I was thinking that would happen  
3 because this was such a visible position in the community  
4 and such an important one --

5 **MS. CAPPEL:** Okay.

6 **MS. STRATTON:** -- that there would be something  
7 around -- or a process around it but there wasn't.

8 **MS. CAPPEL:** Before Chief Straub departed, I mean,  
9 I'm not going to call it a resignation because it's been  
10 characterized in different ways, but before he departed the  
11 City, had anyone brought to your attention that Monique  
12 Cotton had made a sexual harassment complaint against him?

13 **MS. STRATTON:** No. What had been brought to, you  
14 know, our attention was just that innuendo and the gossip  
15 that there had been a relationship with the Chief.

16 **MS. CAPPEL:** But no -- no information that she had  
17 raised a complaint of sexual harassment?

18 **MS. STRATTON:** No, not until it came out that she  
19 did.

20 **MS. CAPPEL:** And how did it come out?

21 **MS. STRATTON:** It was in the paper -- I think it  
22 was in the paper.

23 **MS. CAPPEL:** And that's how you learned?

24 **MS. STRATTON:** Yeah.

25 **MS. CAPPEL:** Did you learn at any time before

1 Frank Straub left the City that the city attorney's office  
2 had conducted any kind of investigation around his behavior?

3 MS. STRATTON: No.

4 MS. CAPPEL: Did you learn that subsequently?

5 MS. STRATTON: No.

6 MS. CAPPEL: So you --

7 MS. STRATTON: I don't know if there was any -- I  
8 had not heard that there was any investigation or that  
9 people were looking into it.

10 MS. CAPPEL: Okay. I'm looking through my list to  
11 see if there's anything more I need to address.

12 MS. STRATTON: Let me see here.

13 MS. CAPPEL: I think I've covered all the points  
14 on the scope document. Is there anything else that you want  
15 to add that you think is relevant to these issues that I  
16 haven't thought to ask you about?

17 MS. STRATTON: The only thing that I think I've  
18 been clear about this actually since I've been a Council  
19 member the whole time I've been at the City is, and I look  
20 at number four and it says "Were the City policies and  
21 procedures followed in connection with complaints that were  
22 made known?"

23 I think the biggest problem that we have -- and  
24 unfortunately, these have brought it to light, but there  
25 really is -- whether there are policies and procedures in

1 place, I don't know and I don't know if our employees know  
2 that. I think we have a real issue, a fundamental issue  
3 with a process by which an employee can make a complaint or  
4 seek some kind of protection from our HR department.

5 I think it's easier with civil service because,  
6 you know, there's a book and there's rules and you follow  
7 them. But for as long as I've been with the City, that's  
8 been an issue. It's murky and it's who you know or who you  
9 don't know or who is going to help and who is not going to  
10 help.

11 But if we can get to a point where we can come out  
12 of this investigation with some really good policies as far  
13 as how these things are -- we're not immune to them. Every  
14 business, you know, known to man, everybody goes through  
15 some of these, but if we can get to a place where we have  
16 clear objective policies with our HR department, I think  
17 that will help a lot of employees.

18 **MS. CAPPEL:** In terms of when they raise a  
19 concern, how it's handled, that it's done --

20 **MS. STRATTON:** Exactly.

21 **MS. CAPPEL:** -- consistently.

22 **MS. STRATTON:** Exactly. And then changing the  
23 culture of we won't file a complaint because nothing will  
24 get done. That's the culture right now is that if you file  
25 a complaint, you're going to get fired, or if you file a

1 complaint, it's not confidential. And so to me that's --  
2 that's an interesting question because I don't know if any  
3 policies and procedures were followed because I don't know  
4 that we have them. And I don't know that if -- I don't know  
5 that we don't change them given the situation, if that makes  
6 sense.

7 **MS. CAPPEL:** That they're fluid depending on who -  
8 -

9 **MS. STRATTON:** Right.

10 **MS. CAPPEL:** -- is making the complaint.

11 **MS. STRATTON:** Right.

12 **MS. CAPPEL:** So let me ask you, in the situation  
13 which is now pretty clear that Monique came forward with  
14 several concerns, one of them was that she said that the  
15 Chief had sexually harassed her. But she also said she  
16 wasn't making a formal complaint. She didn't want an  
17 investigation, and if there was one, she wouldn't  
18 participate. So what do you think the City -- I mean, do  
19 you think it was unreasonable for the Mayor's office to do  
20 it the way they did it under those circumstances?

21 **MS. STRATTON:** I understand why they did it. I  
22 mean, I can see if an employee comes to you and says they've  
23 been sexually harassed but they're not going to do anything  
24 about it. But the issue is if you're a manager or the mayor  
25 or city administrator, you have to think about those people

1 that are still in the workplace.

2 And so to me, the -- the understanding that this  
3 was sexual harassment, that we have female officers and  
4 female employees still working under this person. I think  
5 what should have -- what I would have done is just said we  
6 can't honor that. You've told us. We have got to do an  
7 investigation. We've got to do it now.

8 I mean, I just -- I think those kinds of things  
9 should not be up for discussion. You make that decision  
10 because you worry. I mean, that's what I thought about is  
11 the things we started hearing and then combine it with the -  
12 - with sexual harassment and you're seeing a police chief  
13 who is working with other women in his department and he has  
14 a gun. I mean, you do -- you worry about that stuff.

15 The other thing I wouldn't have done, which I've  
16 never understood, so they moved her to parks on the fifth  
17 floor of City Hall. And the Chief, after he was -- after he  
18 resigned was working until the end of the month doing some  
19 work for legal. So he had to go to legal in City Hall.  
20 It's on the fifth floor of City Hall. They're right across  
21 from each other. And that always bothered me. I thought do  
22 you really take this stuff serious. I would have thought  
23 about that a little bit.

24 **MS. CAPPEL:** Do you know if he actually came into  
25 work?

1 MS. STRATTON: I don't know.

2 MS. CAPPEL: Okay.

3 MS. STRATTON: I just thought it was -- you know,  
4 that's a frightening thing and you don't know what  
5 somebody's experience has been but -- I went right to those  
6 female employees that were working under him and worried  
7 about if that was going to continue.

8 MS. CAPPEL: Okay. Okay. Is there anything else  
9 that we should cover? This is not your only opportunity.  
10 If something occurs to you after --

11 MS. STRATTON: No, I think we're good.

12 MS. CAPPEL: -- you leave today --

13 MS. STRATTON: I think we're good.

14 MS. CAPPEL: Okay. Then we will go off the  
15 record.

16 MS. STRATTON: Perfect.

17 THE REPORTER: The time is 2:36 p.m. We are off  
18 record.

19 And Counsel, of course you want to order a copy?

20 MS. CAPPEL: Yes.

21 (Whereupon, the interview of Karen Stratton  
22 concluded at 2:36 p.m.)

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

I, Erin Evelyn Barnhill, do hereby certify that I reported all proceedings adduced in the foregoing matter and that the foregoing transcript pages constitutes a full, true and accurate record of said proceedings to the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am neither related to counsel or any party to the proceedings nor have any interest in the outcome of the proceedings.

IN WITNESS HEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 31st day of March, 2016.



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Erin Evelyn Barnhill



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Transcriber: Barnhill/McLain

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This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. On the left side, there is a vertical margin line, creating a narrow left margin. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard ruled sheet of paper. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## DECLARATION

Transcript of: Karen Stratton Date: 03/16/16

Regarding: Frank Straub Resignation

Transcriber: Barnhill/McLain

I declare under penalty of perjury the following to  
be true:

I have read my deposition and the same is true and  
accurate save and except for any corrections as made  
by me on the Correction Page herein.

Signed at \_\_\_\_\_,  
on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2016.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_