

Dear Flint City Council:

I regret to inform you that I have tendered my letter of resignation as the City of Flint's Chief Financial Officer to Mayor Weaver effective March 29, 2019. I will be working diligently to handoff my institutional knowledge, learning and responsibilities to the proper staff and entities over the next few weeks. During this time, I ask that you limit your referral requests to the Finance Department to what is *absolutely necessary* during this time of transition.

As I move from a state of executing job duties to a state of reflection, I am reminded of some of the lessons I learned while at Harvard Business School.<sup>1</sup> The lessons I have learned while in this office were not just those about accounting and finance, but instead those dealing with *leadership*. My leadership skills, even more than my technical skills, have been tested in this office. Indeed, I have been here for over 17 months and I have tried to work with you closely. I have been accused of lying, cheating and mismanaging funds. These lies and innuendos were passed on to the media in an attempt to slander my professional name. That phase of politics showed me that it was time to move on; my career means more to me and my family than being attacked and the truth distorted on a daily basis.

We have seen the city continue to recover from one of the worst environmental and human disasters in recent history. We have seen the city move out of receivership to full restoration of local control. We know the city continues to be at risk financially. It is with this in mind that I ask – no, beg – you to really reflect as well on what you have been tasked to do by the citizens of this great city.

In your position, terms like “politics as usual” dominate the day. By politics as usual, I mean making sure everything that Councilmembers do works to hurt your political opponents. Some of you view the world through a lens of political one-upsmanship. Without any trepidation, you move outside of your elected positions as legislators to “witch-hunt” the Mayor, her administration or one another. Please remember that while the Mayor is not perfect, she and her administration work tirelessly for this city and this city is entrenched in our hearts. I can attest to the countless hours Mayor Weaver and her staff put into keeping this city running. Somehow that escapes the dialogue that happens in Council chambers on a regular basis. Council also goes out of its way to attack one another day in and day out, preventing productive dialogue and respectful debate on incredibly important matters.

Flint has been through too much, such as multiple emergency managers, rescinding of public services, receivership, and the water crisis. Yes, *politics as usual* is the order of the day in many cities, counties, states and even federal government. It is expected, but I propose to you that due to Flint's situation, you cannot practice *politics as usual*. Flint, instead, needs leadership and needs it now.

Let me explain what that means. *Politics as usual* is going into the auditor's review of the city's financials with an ear for weapons to attack administration, such as P-card work papers and questions around payments (allowed by resolution) from the water fund to AECOM. *Leadership* is reviewing the material from the auditor, reading it in an unbiased fashion and asking follow-up questions around future risks to the city's finances, such as the significant reallocation of OPEB charges impacting the Sewer Fund's fund balance (see page 2-13 of the CAFRs you received... sadly, the auditor and I have received no questions regarding this; I will discuss at budget proposal). *Politics as usual* is writing letters to the Attorney General's office – an entity that is not setup to ensure financial solvency – and potentially violating the

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<sup>1</sup> Contrary to what some of the City Council may believe, I really did graduate from Harvard.

Open Meetings Act and Flint City Charter due to “concerns” for a payment to a company whose contract was approved by the Council. After doing all of this, when it is time to explain your actions – on the record – your most vocal member conveniently cannot stay in Finance Committee meeting. *Leadership* is asking for (not avoiding) a special order when questions arise, responding to referrals and addressing concerns that are made about your actions. It is being accountable for what you do. *Politics as usual* is weaponizing the press to further divide an already divided community and launch accusations of racism.<sup>2</sup> *Leadership* is offering to take Councilmembers with whom you do not often agree and having a one-on-one, constructive dialogue on what could be done to address concerns and work together.

While your actions may have frustrated me many times, God has made it clear that He is ready for me to move onto the next challenge and that is the reason for my departure. I am in a mode of reflection; I am using this as an opportunity to express my concerns to you as a body. My frustration is now morphing into a numbness and a sadness.

I would also like to emphasize that while I am addressing you as a collective body, my words are not meant for everyone in this Council individually. Some of you have been supportive since day one. I cannot tell you how much that has meant to me and I will make sure we continue to have a friendship well beyond my departure. Some of you have disagreed with me on one or more occasion but done so constructively and respectfully. I know we will also continue and I appreciate that type of interaction.

These words are for you as a collective body. Somehow, you as individuals must each figure out how the collective body can work together in a constructive manner for the City of Flint. Flint deserves and needs this unity in its legislative branch.

Finally, I would like to end this on a positive note. I reflect on the night back in November of 2017 when the City Council unanimously approved my appointment as the Chief Financial Officer of this city. At no point have I taken that approval lightly. I have worked very hard to fulfill what I believe is an awesome responsibility. We have had some accomplishments and some rough days. The purpose of this letter is not to belittle or attack, but instead, to persuade. I want to persuade this council to show true leadership and rise above the politics as usual to bring the Flint community to the next level.

While I will move onto other responsibilities, a piece of my heart will *always* reside in the center of Genesee County in a place called Flint, Michigan. I just want to make sure that piece of my heart does not become broken.

Warm Regards,

Hughey Newsome  
Chief Financial Officer  
City of Flint, Michigan

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<sup>2</sup> It is sad that the reporter who had accurate information provide to him by the City, chose to put out a baseless and misleading story to the public.