

## **Statement to Council regarding IC Complaint CE051425(2)**

When my children apologize to each other, I tell them that an apology has three parts. I'm sorry means: I understand that you are hurt, I understand how my actions lead to that hurt, and I promise you won't face that harm from me again. I have thought a great deal, leading up to this meeting, about apology in this context.

I understand how this meeting was upsetting to the CAO. I am a single mother of three children. I know how frightening the possible loss of income can be, when your whole world is relying on you for their stability. When they've been unsettled and relocated, and you would do anything not to put them in that predicament again. And Ms. Herd was let go by her last municipality before us. She packed up and moved her family in order to work for us. I can empathize, perhaps better than most in this chamber, with the anxiety she could feel when members of the council she serves express displeasure at her professional decision.

I understand how I played a role in that hurt. I understand that receiving questions not from one, but from two members of her council could feel overwhelming. I understand that if those questions had come in the morning by email, she could have crafted thoughtful and fulsome responses, rather than grasping to articulate her position on the fly.

So first, Ms. Herd has my empathy for the predicament — and second, my regret that questioning her became necessary. I cannot responsibly promise not to over-question decisions in the future, unless this council equips us with the necessary tools for accountability. And here, I seek the support of Ms. Herd and this council. I have brought motion after motion to this council, urging better accountability. In February of 2023, I moved that we record closed sessions - a policy recommended by the Ombudsman - so that if a complaint about a closed session were to arise, we would have footage. My motion was defeated. I brought another motion in March of 2023, asking that we receive a written overview of each closed session matter, rather than

receiving verbal-only reports. If that had been available for the meeting in question, Cr. Graham and I both might have had time to send questions in emails, or ask them in one-on-one phone calls in advance. Options that would have been far less hostile than the deluge of questions that followed my dizzying sudden awareness of possible legislative conflicts, formation of precedents, and my sense of urgency to absorb a great deal of information about these problems too quickly and without preparation. Either of these proactive motions might have negated the event or the difficulty of investigating it. And even now, these policies are not recommended as a lesson learned the hard way.

I swore an oath to the 13, 000 people who live in Central Elgin. I promised to work faithfully and diligently for them. I cannot uphold that oath without asking questions about the ways their money is spent, about the rules our staff and council abide by. And that commitment to the public must be the cornerstone of the work we do here. I wish that I could promise not to repeat this scenario but, without the support of this council, I do not know that I can keep that promise. If we cannot be prepared before our meetings for their content, I cannot promise that I will not have a flood of unplanned questions. If we cannot record our actions, I cannot even prove my conduct. I cannot break my oath, and my oath requires me to question when I think a wrong has occurred. Therefore I urge my colleagues to vote not only to accept the suggested training, but also to reconsider these two motions for accountability. This council *can* ensure both staff respect and procedural accountability — neither should come at the expense of the other. I am committed to respectful discourse. But I also need the means to do my job responsibly and with diligence.

I will write a letter expressing my empathy, my regret, and my good faith intention not to push farther than my oath compels me. I know that if I were hearing out my child's apology to her sister, that third one would fall short of a promise. I talked with my middle child about this meeting. I told her I have five sixths of an apology, and the earnest desire to be able to offer one completely, but that I am missing the certainty that Ms. Herd is safe from more of the same. She asked me to round up. She is old enough to understand by what pains I knit our world back together. She is old enough to

understand what three unpaid months means. She said five sixths of "I'm sorry" is close enough to just say it. For her sake, I wanted to. I have no desire to jeopardize our income in the three months leading up to Christmas. But someday she will be old enough to sit at this table, should she choose to, and I don't want her to have learned from her mother that hopeful promises are enough. So I will write the most whole, sincere, and faithful letter that I can offer. I ask Ms. Herd and Ms. Craig to receive it in that spirit, and I ask this council to make the changes that would make my good intentions a reality.