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Dear Sir or Madam:

February 25, 2014

It is my understanding that Your Board is currently collecting information in order to address concerns about inappropriate behavior in the form of bullying of County Employees by Department Heads, Supervisors, or other staff (Management). I am writing this letter to share my knowledge of some instances of bullying because it has been going on for decades and I want to see it stopped. Besides the illegality of bullying it also leads to frustrated staff, low morale, loss of corporate knowledge, a decline in productivity and a hostile work environment, all of which play havoc on the County in the loss of economic stability, reputation and effectiveness.

The County has lost many good people over the years. There was a time when there were new department heads in some departments as often as every six months or so. I recall much turnover of department heads in the Planning, Information Services, Human Services and Building Departments.

I was one of the employees that experience the massive upheaval in the Treasure-Tax Collectors office when new management was brought on in the 1980's. In fact I was hesitant to write this letter based on that period of time when staff was forced to go to group therapy with a promise of confidentiality and then later the counselor hired for the job broke those confidences when she was forced to report back to the Board the substance of staff's input and surveys. Further, once a Grand Jury was called and most of the staff was called to testify, the stories were actually laughed at by the jurors. No action was taken against the Department Head even though her actions were such that the entire staff left or was replaced.

I personally experience a demotion from FAM after having done the job for just over a year (an instance of an illegal action by Management) because the Auditor had told my Director that if he did not demote me he (the Auditor) would make sure my Director lost his job. My Director believed this as the Auditor had made good on similar threats to other Management.

The following are some general examples of inappropriate actions in the County.

- Staff being:
 - o angrily ordered to handle a matter after a call from the public to Management when staff had previously been instructed to leave the matter left undone
 - o warned to keep quiet about Management taking credit for staffs ideas or work
 - o told by Management to spy on others and report back
 - o told to lie for Management often to other Management
 - o harassed due to a feuding between Management

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- More specifically
 - o The CAO not allowing certain departments to process contracts, withholding budget funds, and setting unreasonable deadlines because they were upset with the Department Head
 - o Risk Management delaying the approval of contracts for department they considered difficult
 - o Risk Management refusing to pay claims because they did not think them important even though the insurance company approved the claim
 - o Auditor changing procedures but not advising departments of change or providing instructions on new procedures
 - o Auditor returning claims to be corrected or redone repeatedly, again with no indication of the reason, in order to delay payments because they have formed a vendetta against a department
 - o Auditor telling public when they call about a payment that originating department was not processing them timely and that the Auditor would make payment immediately. This was done in order to look good to public
 - o Auditor stating that Management or staff would be demoted, fired, or black listed because of anger with that departments Management
 - o Treasurer-Tax Collector asking staff to behave inappropriately, spy on each other and in so doing eliminate specific staff and intimidate the remaining staff causing an intolerable environment

These are the departments where I have experience or seen such behavior. I cannot address the practices in others.

While this behavior has taken place over the years and the Board has turned a blind eye toward it, I hope Your Board will finally take appropriate action and put a stop to these shameful practices. The behavior is mostly at the Management level, but it is staff that deals with the day to day difficulty and the resulting fall-out. They are put in the position of working in this very hostile environment or seeking other employment and are the ones who ultimately pay to price of this improper behavior.

Please assure that this letter is provided as an attachment to any Board Items addressing the concerns with bullying and misconduct but especially Items 18 and 19 of the upcoming meeting that relate to this issue.

Sincerely,

Bobbie North