

April 18, 2025

***Via E-Mail to City Attorney ([MDuffy@palmcoastgov.com](mailto:MDuffy@palmcoastgov.com))***

Mayor Mike Norris  
Vice Mayor Theresa Carli Pontieri  
Council Member Charles A. Gambaro, Jr.  
Council Member Ty Miller  
Council Member David Sullivan  
City of Palm Coast  
160 Lake Avenue  
Palm Coast, Florida 32164

**RE: INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGATIONS OF VIOLATIONS OF THE PALM COAST CITY CHARTER, INTERFERENCE WITH CITY EMPLOYEES, AND OTHER UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT BY MAYOR MIKE NORRIS**

Dear City Council Members:

This report summarizes my findings based on witness interviews and formal complaints regarding Mayor Mike Norris's conduct. The investigation focuses on allegations of Mayor Norris's interference in the performance of the duties of city employees under the City Manager's supervision. The investigation further provides options for the City Council to consider as it determines the best path forward for the City of Palm Coast.

**I. Individuals Contacted:**

- A. Renina Fuller, Director of Human Resources (Enclosure 1)
- B. Jason DeLorenzo, Chief of Staff (Enclosure 2)
- C. Brittany Kershaw, Director of Communications & Marketing (Enclosure 3)
- D. Lauren Johnston, Acting City Manager (Enclosure 4)
- E. Jose Paper, Senior Planner (Enclosure 5)
- F. Ray Tyner, Deputy Director of Community Development (Enclosure 6)

- G. Marcus Duffy, City Attorney (Enclosure 7)
- H. Edward Danko, Former City Council Member (Enclosure 8)
- I. Paul Rice, Director of Real Estate Development, Raydient (Enclosure 9)
- J. Kyle Berryhill, Fire Chief (Enclosure 10)
- K. Jeff Douglas, Douglas Property & Development (Enclosure 11)
- L. Patrick Appolonia, Multimedia Associate (Enclosure 12)
- M. Mike Norris, Mayor (Enclosure 13)

## **II. Materials Reviewed:**

- A. Text from Mayor Norris with his notes of what he conveyed to the Acting City Manager and Chief of Staff on March 10, 2025 (Enclosure 14)
- B. Statement of Brittany Kershaw dated November 15, 2024 (Enclosure 15)
- C. Statement of Patrick Appolonia dated November 15, 2024 (Enclosure 16)
- D. Statement of Renina Fuller dated November 15, 2024 (Enclosure 17)
- E. Statement of Shannon P. Martin dated December 16, 2024 (Enclosure 18)
- F. Statement of Patrick Buckley dated February 26, 2025 (Enclosure 19)
- G. Ethics Complaint filed by Edward Danko dated March 31, 2025 (Enclosure 20)
- H. FlaglerLive, "Mayor Norris in Pattern of Offensive Behavior Toward Staff Since November, Internal Complaints Show," March 18, 2025 (Enclosure 21)
- I. Flagler County Buzz Interview of Mayor Norris dated March 20, 2025, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=i8M4CgQazK0>.
- J. 2025 State of the City Address, available at [https://www.youtube.com/live/tw6\\_j5Wd1bw](https://www.youtube.com/live/tw6_j5Wd1bw).

### **III. Separation of Powers Under the Palm Coast City Charter.**

The Charter establishes a council-manager form of municipal government. This governance model is frequently termed a "weak mayor" system. According to Article IV, paragraph (1)(a)(2), the Mayor is an at-large member of the five-member City Council. Under Article IV, paragraph (4), the Mayor is the ceremonial head of the City government, presides over City Council meetings, and exercises narrowly defined emergency and contractual powers. Importantly, the Mayor has no administrative duties beyond those specifically enumerated within the Charter.

Pursuant to Article V, Section 2(c)(6), the Charter delegates authority to the City Manager to hire and fire most city employees:

The City Manager may appoint, suspend, or remove any employee of the City. The City Manager may also delegate this authority to any administrative officers who are subject to the City Manager's direction and supervision with respect to subordinates in that officer's department, office, or agency within the guidelines of stated personnel policies and procedures.

The Charter does not grant the Mayor or any individual Council Member the authority to unilaterally terminate the employment of any City employee. Furthermore, Article V explicitly designates the City Manager and City Attorney as Charter Officers removable only by a majority vote of the full City Council (Article V, Section 1). Any unilateral attempt by a Council Member, including the Mayor, to influence employment status, particularly involving removal or direct supervision, violates this structure.

Apart from exercising the City Council's collective authority to hire and fire Charter Officers and the right to make policy decisions as a legislative body, individual Council Members (including the Mayor) may not interfere with personnel decisions entrusted to the City Manager. Article IV, paragraph 11, of the Charter expressly provides:

(11) *Noninterference by City Council.* Except for the purpose of inquiry and information, the Council and its members, including committees thereof, are expressly prohibited from interfering with the performance of the duties of any City employee who is under the direct or indirect supervision of the City Manager or City Attorney. Such action shall be malfeasance within the meaning of Florida Statutes.

The critical term "interfering" is not defined in the Charter. Black's Law Dictionary (12th ed. 2024) provides the following definition of "interference":

**interference** *n.* (18c)

1. The act or process of obstructing normal operations or intervening or meddling in the affairs of others.

“Even in ordinary language ‘interference’ implies the operation of a process that proceeds by itself on certain principles because its parts obey certain rules. We would not call it interference if we oiled a clockwork, or in any other way secured the conditions that a going mechanism required for its proper functioning. Only if we changed the position of any particular part in a manner which is not in accord with the general principle of its operation, such as shifting the hands of a clock, can it properly be said that we have interfered. The aim of interference thus is always to bring about a particular result which is different from that which would have been produced if the mechanism had been allowed unaided to follow its inherent principles. If the rules on which such a process proceeds are determined beforehand, the particular results it will produce at any one time will be independent of the momentary wishes of men.” 2 Friedrich A. Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty* 128–29 (1976).

2. An obstruction or hindrance.

...

Thus, *interfering* is the act of meddling, intervening, or intruding into affairs or duties that one is not authorized to influence or control. It typically refers to unauthorized involvement in the performance of another official’s lawful responsibilities, especially in a manner that impedes or undermines that person’s duties.

When applied to Palm Coast’s elected official, such interference could constitute *malfeasance* if it violates the Charter—such as an individual Council Member attempting to direct or remove staff under the exclusive authority of the City Manager. The Charter defines “malfeasance” in reference to Florida Statutes. Under Section 112.317, Florida Statutes, any violation of the state’s Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees (Chapter 112, Part III), or of Article II, Section 8 of the Florida Constitution, by a public officer constitutes malfeasance, misfeasance, or neglect of duty in office.

The Charter does not provide a specific remedy for improper interference by a Council Member in the operational and personnel decisions reserved to the City Manager. However, malfeasance can generally lead to penalties including removal from office, suspension, public censure, salary forfeiture, civil fines, and restitution. While some of these penalties require a

political process (e.g., a censure resolution adopted by a majority vote of the City Council), the Florida Commission on Ethics can also impose certain penalties.

#### **IV. Potential Violations of the Palm Coast City Charter.**

On November 5, 2024, the citizens of Palm Coast elected Mike Norris to serve as the City's fifth Mayor and at-large member of the City Council. Since he assumed office, numerous city employees, a former member of the City Council, and other citizens have reported potential violations of the City Charter, ethics violations, the creation of a hostile work environment for city employees, and other alleged unprofessional behavior by Mayor Norris.

The attached enclosures detail the testimony and evidence that relate to specific allegations against Mayor Norris. The most relevant facts are summarized below.

##### **A. Unilateral Attempt to Obtain the Resignations of the Acting City Manager and Chief of Staff.**

Multiple witness statements confirm that Mayor Norris explicitly requested resignations from Acting City Manager Lauren Johnston and Chief of Staff Jason DeLorenzo without Council authorization:

- Lauren Johnston recalls that Mayor Norris suggested as early as December 2024 that Jason DeLorenzo, Patrick Buckley, and others in the Building Department should be fired. However, Mayor Norris backed off once Ms. Johnston advised him that Mr. DeLorenzo was essential to the city's operations. (Enclosure 4).
- Jeff Douglas recalls that in January 2025, Mayor Norris told him: "This is my city now and that fucking Jason DeLorenzo, I'm going to fire his fucking ass the first chance I get. And after that, I am going to fire Lauren."
- Lauren Johnston reports that when she was schedule to go on a radio show to talk about utility rates, Mayor Norris threatened her, saying "If you don't make me look good. I'm going to fire your ass." (Enclosure 4).
- City Attorney Marcus Duffy recalls a conversation in which Mayor Norris told him, "You've got to help me convince Lauren to fire Jason. He's at the top of the spiderweb of corruption." (Enclosure 7).
- Renina Fuller heard that Mayor Norris also wanted to terminate both Brittany Kershaw and herself in addition to Lauren Johnston and Jason DeLorenzo. (Enclosure 1).

- Lauren Johnston states that during a meeting on March 10, 2025, the Mayor explicitly stated he had lost confidence and requested immediate resignations from her and Jason DeLorenzo, describing it as a “one-way conversation.” (Enclosure 4).
- Jason DeLorenzo confirms being explicitly asked to resign during the same meeting, noting that Mayor Norris offered no explanation other than loss of confidence. He further recalls that Mayor Norris never liked him and told others that Mr. DeLorenzo needed to “leave the organization” shortly after Mayor Norris took office. (Enclosure 2).
- Marcus Duffy remembers that Mayor Norris explicitly asked Lauren Johnston and Jason DeLorenzo for resignations and advised the mayor that he did not have the authority to do so. (Enclosure 7).
- Marcus Duffy told Mayor Norris on three occasions that he could not interfere with city employees who are not Charter Officers, including the Chief of Staff. (Enclosure 7).
- Mayor Norris admits he requested resignations but claims it was not a demand, demonstrating awareness of the limitations imposed by the Charter while still attempting to influence personnel decisions unilaterally. (Enclosure 13).
- Mayor Norris provided a copy of the script he used during the conversation. (Enclosure 14). The script speaks for itself and is largely consistent with the testimony of all four witnesses present during the conversation.

The four primary witnesses—Mayor Norris, Lauren Johnston, Jason DeLorenzo, and Marcus Duffey—provided strikingly similar accounts of the March 10 conversation in which Mayor Norris requested the resignations of Lauren Johnston and Jason DeLorenzo.

This conduct likely meets the definition of inference under the Charter. Even if he simply requested resignations, Mayor Norris was not authorized as an individual Council Member to interfere or intrude into personnel decisions. And even if the full City Council voted to remove Lauren Johnston from her present role as the Acting City Manager (which it has not), only the City Manager can hire or fire Chief of Staff Jason DeLorenzo.

There is a question about whether Mayor Norris believed that he had exceeded his authority under the Charter. The wording of the script that he read from (Enclosure 14) suggests that he believed that anything short of an express demand for resignations would not constitute improper interference under the Charter. However, the March 10, 2025, conversation was not the first time that he voiced his desire to “fire” both Lauren Johnston and Jason DeLorenzo. Indeed, the City Attorney had to advise him on three different occasions that he could not interfere with city employees as an individual council member.

Mayor Norris is entitled to express his opinions and to voice his own views of the performance of city employees, including the Acting City Manager and Chief of Staff. Mayor Norris is not shy about expressing strong opinions during City Council meetings, the State of the City address, press interviews, and directly to city employees. The City Attorney has also advised Mayor Norris that if he has clear evidence of corruption or unethical behavior by a city employee, he can and should bring that evidence to the City Manager. Indeed, at least one city employee has been terminated by the Acting City Manager following an investigation prompted by a complaint from the Mayor.

Unfortunately, during the March 10 conversation, Mayor Norris did not simply express a personal view or provide evidence of corruption by a city employee. Rather, Mayor Norris explicitly sought to pressure the Acting City Manager and Chief of Staff to submit their resignations. And while he is always free to move the full City Council to vote to terminate the Acting City Manager, the unilateral attempt to obtain the resignation of city employees, particularly the Chief of Staff, crossed the line into interference with operational and personnel decisions that Mayor Norris is not entitled to make in a council-manager form of government.

#### **B. Inappropriate and Profane Comments Directed at Female Staff.**

Witness testimony provides at least two examples of inappropriate behavior directed toward female staff:

- Brittany Kershaw described an incident in which Mayor Norris publicly insulted her toenail polish, calling it “fucking trash bag” color. (Enclosures 3, 15). Patrick Appolonia overheard and confirmed this comment. (Enclosures 12, 16). Ms. Kershaw found the incident unsettling but manageable given the mayor’s lack of authority to fire her. (Enclosure 3).
- Renina Fuller reported Mayor Norris criticized Lauren Johnston’s professional attire, describing her clothing as a “Hillary Clinton pantsuit.” (Enclosure 1). Lauren Johnston confirmed this incident, noting it as unnecessary, unprofessional, and demoralizing. (Enclosure 4). Mayor Norris admitted that he said Ms. Johnston’s outfit looked like a Hillary Clinton pantsuit, but said he was kidding around and that he has also given her genuine compliments before. (Enclosure 13).

These actions constitute violations of professional standards. As Ms. Fuller notes, it is improper for any employee or elected official to comment on a female’s body part. (Enclosure 1). While the comments are not necessarily violations of the Charter, the mayor’s statements expose the city to the risk of potential lawsuits based on a perceived hostile and discriminatory work environment for women.

### **C. Demeaning Comments Directed Toward the Communications & Marketing Department.**

Multiple city employees in the Communications & Marketing Department report being belittled by Mayor Norris to the point where they struggle to effectively perform their duties:

- Brittany Kershaw recounted Mayor Norris berating the department's work on the Starlight Parade livestream, using profanity, calling the work "garbage" and "horseshit." He said that he did not need the department and had his own marketing team. This comment negatively impacted employee morale and effectiveness (Enclosures 3, 4, 18). Lauren Johnston confirmed the incident and recalled confronting the mayor and asking him to apologize (Enclosure 4). Mayor Norris acknowledged the incident, but explained that he apologized and did not want special attention from the Communications & Marketing Department. (Enclosure 13).
- Patrick Appolonia described repeated combative and belittling interactions, undermining the department's morale and effectiveness. He stated that the mayor has made it incredibly difficult for the marketing team to do their jobs every single day. (Enclosure 12).
- Paul Rice recalls that Mayor Norris questioned the usefulness or viability of both the Communications & Marketing Department as well as the Utility Department.
- Fire Chief Kyle Berryhill encouraged city employees who felt attacked by Mayor Norris to continue to "win through competence" and expressed optimism that a working relationship with the mayor could eventually be established. (Enclosure 10).

These behaviors impeded the professional duties and effectiveness of city employees, especially the productivity of the Communications & Marketing Department, which needs to work closely with Mayor Norris to promote Palm Coast. (Enclosure 3).

### **D. Alleged Age Discrimination.**

Age discrimination violates city human resources policies mandated under the Charter and broader employment law standards.

- Renina Fuller reported a meeting where Mayor Norris explicitly advocated for hiring younger employees due to older employees being costly in healthcare benefits, and later publicly commented about wanting older, long-term employees "gone," clearly violating non-discrimination standards (Enclosure 1).

The mayor's guidance, if followed, could have exposed the city to age-discrimination claims. However, I found no evidence of actual age discrimination by the city. Ms. Fuller



properly declined to follow Mayor Norris's suggestion and reaffirmed the city's commitment to following the law.

### **E. Use of Profanity and Verbal Intimidation.**

The use of profanity and verbal intimidation represents a clear breach of professional standards:

- Lauren Johnston, Brittany Kershaw, and Patrick Appolonia reported frequent profanity and intimidating behavior by Mayor Norris, including a comment that he wanted to "choke out" an economic developer. (Enclosures 3, 4, 12).
- Patrick Buckley reported to HR that Mayor Norris reportedly spoke to a resident in the presence of a city employee and said, "Let me know if he [the employee] gives you any shit." (Enclosures 1, 2, 19).
- Lauren Johnston, Ray Tyner, and Kyle Berryhill reported that Mayor Norris insisted that a developer be kept out of City Hall. (Enclosures 4, 6, 10). Mayor Norris denied the incident as described by the three witnesses. He acknowledges that developers have business in city hall, but insists that security protocols be followed at all times and accurate logs be kept. (Enclosure 13).
- Jason DeLorenzo described Norris using profanity and threats toward staff and residents, creating a culture of intimidation (Enclosure 2).
- Jeff Douglas detailed an incident where Norris openly cursed and threatened to terminate city staff members, demonstrating highly unprofessional behavior (Enclosure 11).
- Mayor Norris told staff member Jose Papa that he was going to "ruin your day today" as they walked with him to a meeting. (Enclosures 2, 5, 6). Both Ray Tyner and Jose Paper recall the comment, but neither appear to have been offended by the remark. (Enclosure 5, 6)
- Paul Rice confirmed aggressive and derogatory comments made by Norris about city staff, specifically targeting DeLorenzo and Tyner (Enclosure 9).
- Jeff Douglas's company has directed employees to avoid and not engage with Mayor Norris for safety reasons. (Enclosure 11).

As Ms. Fuller notes, if a normal city employee were to use profanity against a resident, that employee would be subject to corrective action, such as training or suspension. (Enclosure 1). Moreover, unprofessional and profane behavior can permanently undermine the city's ability to effectively serve its residents and the broader public. (Enclosures 9 and

11). To the extent that Palm Coast desires to work with business leaders who want to invest in the community, Mayor Norris's comments may undermine that goal and damage relationships that have benefited the city in the past.

That being said, Mayor Norris's excessive use of profanity is not in itself a violation of the Charter.

## V. Recommendations.

The City Council has several options for responding to the findings in this report. The options include:

- **Refer for Further Legal Review:** The City Council may refer the matter to the Florida Commission on Ethics.
- **Initiate Formal Censure Proceedings:** The City Council may adopt a formal resolution censuring Mayor Mike Norris for conduct unbecoming of a public official, including violations of the City Charter.
- **Strengthen the Charter's Enforcement Mechanisms:** The City Council may consider Charter amendments or ordinances to clarify enforcement options when elected officials engage in malfeasance or attempt to make operational and personnel decisions reserved to the City Manager.

The City Council should also consider several steps to improve the relationship between the City Council and the public employees who carry out the council's policy decisions at the operational level. While some city employees appear to genuinely like the mayor, most city employees described low morale and widespread fear about what Mayor Norris will say or do next.

With that in mind, the City Council should consider several steps to restore a professional environment:

- **Hire a Permanent City Manager:** As Fire Chief Berryhill and others have recommended, the city needs a permanent City Manager who has been approved by a vote of the full City Council.
- **Implement Mandatory Training:** Require all elected officials, including Mayor Norris, to complete training on the City Charter, the Sunshine Law, ethics rules for public officers, and respectful workplace conduct to ensure that everyone understands the law and appreciates his or her proper role in a council-manager form of government.

- **Support Staff and Whistleblower Protections:** Affirm the city's commitment to protecting staff who report misconduct and consider adopting a whistleblower protection policy specific to municipal employees. While a permanent City Manager will be largely free to hire or fire other city employees for any legitimate and lawful reason, care should be taken to ensure that no witness who provided a statement for this investigation faces retaliation for their cooperation.
- **Monitor Compliance:** Establish a mechanism for monitoring concerns about the relationship between the City Council and city employees, including regular updates to the Council from the City Manager and Human Resources. It is in everyone's best interest for any real or perceived issues to be addressed in a timely manner, not months after they occur.

## VI. Conclusion.

These findings reveal a pattern of inappropriate conduct and unprofessional behavior by Mayor Mike Norris that undermines the city's council-manager form of government and creates a hostile work environment for city employees. Mayor Norris further exceeded the powers granted under the City Charter by seeking the resignations of the Acting City Manager and Chief of Staff. Further independent investigation and corrective action may be warranted to address these issues and restore integrity and morale.

I am available to answer any questions about my investigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adam Brandon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "A" and "B".

Adam Brandon

## **ENCLOSURE 1**

### **Summary of Interview of Renina Fuller March 28, 2025**

My name is Renina Fuller, and I have been the Director of Human Resources for the City of Palm Coast for the past five years.

I have serious concerns about Mayor Mike Norris's behavior, particularly his treatment of women.

Before the Mayor was officially sworn in, I became aware of an incident involving Brittany Kershaw. At the time, the newly elected officials were having headshots taken. After the photo session, Brittany, Patrick Appolonia (a Multimedia Associate on Brittany's team) and Mayor Norris walked together down the hallway in the community wing, heading toward the council chambers. During that walk, the Mayor looked at Brittany's blue toenail polish (she was wearing open-toed shoes) and said, "What color is that? Is that fucking trash bag color?" It is improper for any employee or council member to comment on a female's body part.

The mayor later made a derogatory comment about Lauren Johnston, the Acting City Manager, criticizing her clothing by referring to it as a "Hillary Clinton pantsuit."

I also received an email from Ms. Shannon Martin regarding an incident involving the entire Communications Department. The mayor interrupted a team meeting to express his dissatisfaction with the Starlight Parade. He wasn't happy with the quality of the video and demanded answers about what had gone wrong. When someone suggested they might need a new camera, Mayor Norris responded, "I'm not buying a damn camera."

Shortly after Mayor Norris was sworn in, Tim Wilsey, Lisa Lynch, and I personally met with the mayor to discuss his benefits. During that meeting, he said something to the effect of: "Employees and health care are the main cost to the city. Older people cost us more money. You need to start hiring younger people." I responded by stating clearly that we cannot and do not discriminate. He claimed to understand the rules, noting his background in HR. Nonetheless, just a few weeks ago, the mayor made problematic public comments on Flagler County Buzz radio about wanting to get long-term and older employees "gone."

During the same meeting, the mayor also remarked: "I hear that we have people driving around the city in city vehicles carrying fresh piss." I explained to him that we have a randomized drug testing program.

In February, I received an email from Patrick Buckle about another concerning incident. Mayor Norris reportedly spoke to a resident in the presence of a city employee and said, "Let me know if he [the employee] gives you any shit." If a city employee made a similar comment to a resident, they would be subject to corrective action, such as training or suspension. Our employees are in fear of retaliation.

Mayor Norris and the other City Council members are required to complete a mandatory four-hour ethics training session provided by ICMA.

Morale among city employees is low, and many staff members are on edge. Mayor Norris has belittled employees from the dais, and as a result, members of the public have also begun treating staff poorly. We work in public service out of dedication, but our efforts often go unrecognized. Mayor Norris has publicly stated that city staff are overpaid.

Lauren Johnston, the Acting City Manager, informed me that Mayor Norris wanted to terminate Jason DeLorenzo, Brittany Kershaw, and myself.

According to Lauren, there was a conversation involving the Mayor, Lauren Johnston, and Jason DeLorenzo, during which Marcus Duffy, the City Attorney, listened to the conversation by phone. In that conversation, Mayor Norris reportedly read from a script he wrote and demanded Lauren and Jason's resignations. City Council can hire or terminate are the City Manager and the City Attorney.

Human Resources has received formal complaints about Mayor Norris from Brittany Kershaw, Shannon Martin, Patrick Buckley, and Patrick Appolonia. I also wrote a statement for the file to document the complaints.

## **ENCLOSURE 2**

### **Summary of Interview of Jason DeLorenzo March 28, 2024**

My name is Jason DeLorenzo. I have lived in the City of Palm Coast for the past 22 years and previously served on the City Council from 2010 to 2015. I have worked for the city for nearly six years and have served as Chief of Staff for the last two. During this time, I've served under three city managers and three mayors. In this role, I coordinate the work of many departments, address citizen concerns, manage legislative priorities, and assist the City Manager. I directly assist the deputy directors for Community Development and Utility, both of which have open director positions. Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Director and Economic Development Manager are direct reports. I report directly to the City Manager.

My position requires annual ethics training. I have attended ethics training provided by the Florida League of Cities (FLC), which focused on topics like the Sunshine Law. It did not include any Human Resources or workplace-conduct training. I recently completed another round of this training. Mayor Mike Norris did not attend the most recent FLC ethics training with the other council members, and I am unsure what his ethics training covers.

On Sunday, March 9, 2025, Mayor Norris sent a group text to me and the Acting City Manager, Lauren Johnston, directing us to attend a 9 a.m. meeting the following day. When I arrived at the meeting on Monday, March 10, shortly after Lauren, the Mayor was already present in the council office. He had the City Attorney, Marcus Duffy, on the phone and stated this would be a "one-way conversation." I understood this to mean we would not have an opportunity to respond. Mayor Norris said he had lost confidence in our ability to lead the organization and asked both of us to resign immediately. He did not offer any further explanation, and after making his request, he excused us from the room.

This came as a complete surprise. I had never been spoken to like that in all my years with the city or elsewhere. Prior to his election, I met Mayor Norris only once while he was still a candidate. Meetings with candidates are common and took place at City Hall. During that meeting, he asked me to leave the room so he could speak privately with the Acting City Manager. She later told me, "He doesn't like you." I eventually learned that I was on a list of people he wanted to remove from the organization if he won the election.

After taking office, Mayor Norris did not speak to me for the first two weeks, despite our proximity within city offices. He reportedly told others that I needed to "leave the organization" and even asked if he had the authority to fire me. The City Attorney advised him that only the City Manager and City Attorney could be hired or fired by the City Council and only through a full vote.

Mayor Norris has referred to having “spider webs” or informants who provide him with internal information. He once said to me directly, “You know I have spider webs, right Jason?” This has caused concern among staff, as it creates a culture of distrust and discourages open communication.

On March 7, 2025, before a City Council meeting, the mayor told staff members Ray Tyner and Jose Papa, “I’m going to ruin your day today,” as they walked with him to the chamber. I overheard this comment and apologized to them. During the meeting, Mayor Norris called for a moratorium on residential construction. But I’m not sure why a moratorium would ruin their day.

Mayor Norris filmed a video posted to a local blog—Flagler Buzz—inviting city employees to meet with him, either inside or outside City Hall, to report wrongdoing. Our city charter is clear about the separation of powers: the entire City Council, including the mayor, sets policy, while operational execution is the responsibility of the City Manager. The mayor’s personal interference in the day-to-day operations of city staff violates this structure. Council decisions must be made as a collective body, not directed unilaterally by a single elected official. There should not be a single elected official making operational decisions or dictating policy when a vote of the full council is required. This is a board structure like a non-profit board, and it’s all about collective decision-making as a board.

The mayor seems unaware that we operate under a weak mayor or council-manager form of local government. He established an office within the executive suite—meant to be a shared space for all council members—but he filled it exclusively with his own belongings and used it as his personal office.

On March 27, 2025, the city announced an economic development project. I was informed through the Acting City Manager that the mayor did not want Ray Tyner or I involved and that only Jose Papa should participate—despite Jose being a long-term planner, not someone typically involved in economic development. Jose expressed confusion, as this was outside his normal duties. As a result, when the media contacted me for information, I couldn’t respond, as I had been excluded from the process.

To this day, I do not know why Mayor Norris has targeted me. I previously worked for the Flagler Homebuilders Association, and it’s possible Mayor Norris has a negative perception of that, but I do not set policy or approve projects. That is the role of City Council. The City Manager has been trying to manage the mayor’s approach, but it remains challenging.

During an executive team meeting, Mayor Norris berated staff, saying, “Developers are not our friends” and that “they are not to come into City Hall.” These statements were unrealistic and undermined the responsibilities of staff, whose role is to ensure compliance

with the city building code and zoning. The mayor singled Ray Tyner out, accusing him of having relationships that were “too close” with developers.

The mayor has said publicly and behind doors he will not vote for more housing. It's important to note the council as a body has not taken a formal vote on development policy. Thus, the full City Council has not made a policy decision that can be implemented by city staff.

Early in his term, the mayor went around me and asked the Economic Development Manager to set up a meeting with developers. I tried to meet with him beforehand to understand the purpose and potential invitees. He questioned why the County Airport Manager, should attend. I believed he should, as the airport is a significant economic asset with the ability to support approximately one million square feet of manufacturing. Mayor Norris eventually arrived late to the meeting, stood at the head of the table, and berated landowners, demanding they build commercial properties and provide entitlements to the city. He told the airport manager, “I don't know why you're here.” I apologized to him and the rest of the attendees after the mayor stormed out.

At a separate meeting with two residents, Dennis McDonald and Ken McDowell, they made several false accusations about utility funds being missing. Mayor Norris questioned me in front of them, asking, “Yeah Jason, where is the \$50 million?” referring to their claim that this amount had been taken from the utility fund. I clarified that there was no such misappropriation. Mayor Norris then yelled and cursed at the residents before walking out.

These types of interactions—marked by yelling and hostility—have made it extremely difficult for city staff to work effectively. Brittany Kershaw, our Communications Director, was also the target of inappropriate comments from Mayor Norris about her toenail polish and was told he didn't need her because he had his “own communications department.”

In another instance the Chief Building Official, overheard Mayor Norris telling a resident, “If they give you any shit, let me know,” referring to city staff. Patrick was deeply upset by this interference in his professional duties, especially since the situation in question involved the structural soundness of a building.

Mayor Norris frequently uses colorful or profane language. While some people are indifferent to it, others find it offensive and inappropriate. Many city employees are concerned about the mayor's conduct, and I've spent a significant amount of time supporting staff to ensure they feel comfortable and secure in their roles.

We currently have several open positions and are in the process of hiring a new City Manager. I want to be able to support the City Council in a productive and collaborative environment, but it has become increasingly difficult to do so while being deliberately excluded and undermined.



To my knowledge, there has been no criminal activity or threats of legal action against the city related to these matters. I am also not aware of any issues with interference from other council members, who have only exchanged information appropriately and never directed me to take specific actions. The behavior I've described represents, in my view, a clear violation of the City Charter's prohibition on interference in administrative functions.

### **ENCLOSURE 3**

#### **Summary of Interview of Brittany Kershaw March 28, 2025**

My name is Brittany Kershaw, and I have served as the Director of Communications & Marketing for the City of Palm Coast for the past four years. I oversee a team of four, and we are responsible for speech writing, marketing, media relations, storytelling, managing the city website, and supporting Mayor Norris and the entire City Council in their ceremonial roles. Historically, we've had a positive work environment and worked well with elected officials, including attending over 100 events per year with proper coordination.

I had no concerns about Mike Norris before his mayoral campaign. However, during his campaign, I noticed he was quick to express anger while attending City Council meetings. While it is not uncommon for our residents to make passionate public comments, then-candidate Norris's temperament stood out as concerning.

My first significant interaction with Mayor Norris occurred the week before he was sworn in. He visited our department to take his official portrait and discuss how the Communications Department would support him and the City Council. While walking through the council chambers, he asked, "What color is that?" I initially thought he was referring to the carpet, but he clarified, pointing to my toenail polish, and said, "No, your toes—what color is that? Fucking trash bag." He then abruptly moved on, saying, "Ok, what's next?" When I began explaining how our team supports elected officials, he dismissed us, saying, "I don't need you. I have my own marketing team." He added that his campaign manager was great at marketing and that I could learn a thing or two from him. Two of my staff members were present and became worried that their jobs were at risk. I had to reassure them that the mayor had no authority over their employment.

This encounter was unsettling but manageable at the time, as the City Manager had explained that the Mayor and Council do not have the authority to hire or fire staff. Unfortunately, subsequent interactions have further deteriorated morale and stability.

On December 16, 2024, following our holiday parade, which our team had live-streamed, Mayor Norris barged into a staff meeting unannounced and began yelling at the Communications team. He used his key card to access the conference room and demanded to know who was responsible for the parade broadcast. He called it "garbage," "trash," and "horseshit," and when a team member mentioned equipment limitations, he shouted that he wasn't buying us another "damn camera" and didn't want to hear excuses. One of the team members was brand new and was visibly shaken. I arrived shortly after Mayor Norris left to find my team upset and confused about what they had done wrong. It was highly inappropriate for him to bypass both myself and the City Manager and vent his frustration directly at staff members.

Two days later, on December 18, 2024, the Acting City Manager told me that Mayor Norris wished to apologize. The team gathered, and Mayor Norris said, "You should've known

I was just picking,” and told them they needed “thicker skin” and to get used to him “because this is just the way I am.” The apology did not land well, and the staff remained upset and uneasy.

There have been numerous similar behavioral issues, even if they don’t rise to the level of charter violations. Mayor Norris frequently uses profanity and unprofessional language. At one point, he said, “Our economic developer needs to start doing his job, or I’m going to choke him out.” While I did not interpret this as a literal threat, it was deeply unprofessional and inappropriate for a workplace setting.

The conduct of Mayor Norris has severely impacted productivity. For example, we are currently planning the State of the City, a project that requires close collaboration with the mayor. Yet, we haven’t met with him in over six weeks. Since our HR complaints were made public, he has cut off all communication with my team. Projects that involve his participation have stalled, and we feel unsupported. On a daily basis, there’s a sense of unease; we show up to work not knowing what we’ll be walking into. We are continuing to do our jobs and perform at a high level, but the disruptions directly tied to the mayor’s behavior have made it harder.

He has made inappropriate comments about employees’ appearances, including remarks about one staff member’s colorful pants. While many of his comments fall short of harassment, they are consistently unprofessional and often inappropriate. He has also asked the City Manager to terminate specific staff members, including myself, the HR Director, and others. At one point, he claimed the sheriff called me “woke,” which the sheriff later denied and clarified directly with Mayor Norris.

I strive for a productive and welcoming workplace. In previous administrations, a close and collaborative relationship with the mayor helped us serve the city better. I’d like to see a return to that level of cooperation.

Staff morale across the organization is low. We’ve had significant leadership turnover in recent years, including a Mayoral resignation, a City Manager resignation nine days later, and a subsequent firing of the next City Manager. Mayor Norris campaigned on a promise to “clean house,” and since taking office, he has made efforts to make good on that promise in ways that have created instability across departments.

Staff throughout the city are affected and on edge. His large social media following exacerbates the effects on staff. His supporters repeat his accusations to staff while they’re performing their duties in public, adding to the tension and undermining public trust.

Mayor Norris has offered no substantive critique of our work beyond calling the parade “horseshit,” although he has occasionally given generic compliments. The Acting City Manager has assistants who work with Mayor Norris regularly, but none report to him directly. I hope to rebuild a functional relationship with the mayor, but that will require a change in his behavior and tone. Our roles are critical to serving the public, and our ability to do so effectively is currently compromised.

## **ENCLOSURE 4**

### **Summary of Interview of Lauren Johnston March 28, 2025**

I have been the Acting City Manager for the past year, following my tenure as Assistant City Manager. In my role, I manage the day-to-day operations of the city, implementing the policies and decisions made by the City Council. The City Manager and the City Attorney are the only two city employees who report directly to the City Council; all other city staff members report to me. I hold a Bachelor's in Public Administration and a Master's in Fire and Emergency Services (Emergency Management).

Before the election, Mayor Norris asked me to meet with him, and I asked for clarification on the topics of discussion so I could be prepared. He wanted lists of essential staff and personnel, which concerned me, so I offered to provide the same records we would normally provide in response to a public records request, but I declined to create new records. At that meeting, he also expressed an interest in the city's westward expansion and wanted to zone everything industrial. I tried to explain the zoning process, but he wasn't hearing it.

At a second meeting, Mayor Norris and his campaign manager Chase, he asked everyone to leave except for me. He told me that many people in the organization were going to have to leave, even though this was before he had won the primary. After the primary, he didn't take up my offer to meet again. Following the general election, I texted him congratulations and told him that I looked forward to working with him. He responded politely.

Unfortunately, the situation became tense soon after he took office. In one meeting with Marcus Duffy, the Mayor asked me to produce several documents, including an alpha roster with the pay and benefits of all city employees. He also made comments about Brittany Kershaw, the Communications Director, claiming that the Sheriff had called her "woke." I found this claim odd because Brittany had worked with Sheriff Staley in the past, so I asked the Sheriff about it. The Sheriff denied making that comment, which led Mayor Norris to become upset with me for checking with the Sheriff.

In December, the Mayor brought to my attention what he referred to as the "spiderwebs" of issues ingrained in the organization. He presented a diagram with names, including Jason, Patrick Buckley, and various building department staff. He wanted updates on these issues, and I kept him informed about our progress, particularly in the building department, which had been a hot topic. There have been some firings and suspensions within that department. Mayor Norris mentioned Jason, who had previously served on the City Council, saying that no one elected should work for the city and that Jason helped developers. Since the Mayor had specifically mentioned Jason twice, I told him that I understood that a new City Manager might want to evaluate all staff, but that I was not taking any action regarding Jason because he was essential to our operations. The mayor backed off, saying, "Jason is useful right now."

One of the most concerning incidents occurred after the Starlight Parade, when Brittany's team was criticized by Mayor Norris for their livestream of the event. I confronted the mayor, telling him that his comments were inappropriate, especially considering that one of the team members was new and on their first day. Mayor Norris agreed to apologize, but when he did, he dismissed the team's feelings, saying they should have "thicker skin." This did not sit well with the team, and morale continued to drop.

I also noticed the mayor's tendency to overstep in operational matters. During a meeting regarding the boat parade, the mayor took control, saying that he would take over running the event in the future. He failed to acknowledge the budget implications of the city running what had been a privately funded event. He also overlooked the fact that the full City Council had not approved of this. In another instance, when I was scheduled to go on a radio show to talk about utility rates, the mayor threatened me, saying, "If you don't make me look good, I'm going to fire your ass." I responded, "OK."

Mayor Norris also took a very selective approach to economic development projects. For example, with a commercial project tied to westward expansion, the mayor didn't want to attend the meeting with the developer or sign an NDA. I encouraged him to attend and not miss out, but the next day, when another project came up, he insisted on giving information only to specific people, excluding Jason and Ray. He only wanted Jose Papa involved.

Recently, I bought new clothes and was excited about my outfit, but Mayor Norris commented, "I don't like pantsuits, you look like Hillary Clinton," which I found unnecessary and unprofessional. That afternoon we had a meeting with the county on the Fuel terminal economic development project. The mayor was the only elected official in the meeting. He wanted us to move forward with communicating details on the project to the public. He said he has his campaign manager on retainer, I interjected and said we needed to at the minimum let the other elected officials know what was going on so they weren't blindsided about this project. This project was being led by the Mayor.

In February 2025, Mayor Norris commented during a meeting with residents: "It's a dog-eat-dog world, and I wear milk bone underwear." This was another example of the Mayor's odd and unprofessional behavior. He continued to make inappropriate comments about staff, including the Economic Development Director. During one meeting, he said that if the Director didn't give him what he wanted, he would "choke him out."

At an executive team meeting, the mayor insisted that a developer be kept out of the building, which I told him was not something we could do. He also expressed anger at the possibility of a moratorium on residential development, but I explained that it wouldn't foster the type of commercial development he was seeking.

In a discussion about the City Manager Search, Mayor Norris made a comment that he can't have another woman up here in City Hall. There were several women in consideration for the City Manager position.

On Sunday, March 9, I received a text from Mayor Norris about a meeting with Jason and me scheduled for the next morning at 9:00 AM. I asked if I needed a computer or notes for the meeting, and the City Attorney, who was on the phone, The Mayor informed me that it was going to be a “one-way conversation” and the mayor said he had lost all confidence in our abilities to lead the organization and wanted us to resign immediately. I called the City Attorney later and reminded him that the mayor couldn’t make such personnel decisions without going through the proper channels.

Mayor Norris didn’t show up for a 2:30 PM standing meeting later that same day.

On March 11, the mayor became aggressive during a meeting with two residents ( Dennis McDonald and Ken McDowell), In the meeting there were several topics discussed like utility well site agreements with Rayonier, then discussed a forensic audit, made comments accusing Jason of mismanaging funds, they Mayor Norris began yelling and cursing at the residents, began naming people “ruining his city” and included the residents in the meeting with us. He said he was working on a state audit. Mr. McDowell replied for the mayor to calm down and not speak to him in that tone. He then stormed off and slammed the office door. He later expressed frustration when I invited the residents to return, saying, “Why the hell did you do that?”

On March 20, the Mayor informed Marcus that he no longer wanted to have meetings with me. This, of course, made it incredibly difficult for me to do my job. The Flagler Buzz interview was released, and Mayor Norris expressed anger that I had gone to the Sheriff about Brittany being “woke.”

All of this has contributed to a challenging work environment. We’re working hard to fix the culture within our organization, but it hasn’t been easy. As part of the onboarding for new elected officials, I had the City Manager of Bunnell, Dr. Jackson, come in to provide training on government ethics and the city’s charter. Dr. Jackson explained the different types of government and why a council–manager system is the preferred model for cities.

Mayor Norris has expressed his desire to reduce city staff and questioned why there has been so much growth. I’m not sure if he’s fully read or understood the charter, but he seems to believe he has more authority than a weak mayor is granted in a council-manager form of government. He has yet to give a reason for his requests.

Despite all these challenges, I want to emphasize that my goal is not retaliation. I am focused on doing the right thing, following policy, and serving the City Council and residents. Despite the challenges, I remain committed to fulfilling my duties to the best of my ability.

## **ENCLOSURE 5**

### **Summary of Interview of Jose Papa March 28, 2024**

My name is Jose Papa. I've been the Senior Planner for over 17 years, and my responsibilities include providing recommendations to the City Council and planning agencies on land use. I don't supervise anyone directly, but I do assist with various departmental tasks, such as coordination with finance, capital improvements, engineering, rezonings, land use, and stormwater. I report directly to Ray Tyner.

I haven't had any interactions with the mayor that raised concerns for me.

The only interaction that stands out for any reason occurred when we were heading to the council chambers for a presentation on the comprehensive plan. I was walking with some other staff members when Mayor Norris said, "We're about to ruin your day." I took this as just a comment about the process being challenging and the meeting potentially being long. I was not offended by the remark.

I prefer that my supervisor is informed whenever an elected official asks me to attend a meeting or wants to assign a particular task as this is the purview of my supervisor.

I work with a very professional group of people, and when situations like this arise, we just power through. Throughout my career, I've dealt with many different personalities, and that experience has helped me handle various challenges.

Overall, I haven't had any personal or personality issues with the mayor. Most of my interactions with the mayor happen from a distance, mainly during public meetings. There's a clear separation between the dais, where the elected officials sit, and where the staff sits.

## **ENCLOSURE 6**

### **Summary of Interview of Ray Tyner March 31, 2024**

I am the Deputy Director of Community Development. I've been with the city since 2002, starting as an environmental planner and later moving up to Planning Manager before becoming the Deputy Director of Community Development. In my role, I oversee the planning division and assist the Chief of Staff. Over the years, I've worked with a variety of City Councils, Mayors, City Managers, and planning board members.

I'm more comfortable going through the City Manager and Chief of Staff with respect to correspondence from the City Council. It's the normal process and helps maintain visibility for leadership. I've had limited direct interactions with Mayor Norris.

There was one incident at an executive team meeting where the mayor questioned why a certain applicant, Jeff Douglas, was in City Hall. He suggested that Jeff shouldn't be there or be treated specially. At the time, Jeff had filed a Bert Harris lawsuit, but the issues Jeff was involved with were unrelated to that case. I explained that neither my staff nor I play favorites; the project was simply going through its technical review phase, and the dialogue was between a surveyor and the developer's representative. Mayor Norris didn't respond after that, so I hope he understood. It caught me off guard, honestly. I've been with the city for a long time, and my staff is very professional, following the American Institute of Certified Planners' Code of Ethics.

Jose, one of my planners, told me the mayor had said to us prior to a City Council meeting that the meeting would be a fun meeting. I was there too, but did not hear it, and Jose said it wasn't a big deal or bother him.

One thing that did stand out was when the Mayor asked Jose to act as a Project Manager for Community Development. That felt a little odd to me, as Jose isn't currently a planner.

Since Mayor Norris took office, there hasn't been any major difference in my job. However, I will say the morale among city staff is uneasy. I do what I can to lift them up, but things always seem to change. We focus on adhering to our comprehensive plan, land development code, and building code. At the end of the day, we concentrate on doing good work for the citizens rather than getting involved in the politics of it all.



## ENCLOSURE 7

### **Summary of Interview of Marcus Duffy March 28, 2024**

I am the City Attorney for the City of Palm Coast. I've been in my role for about a year now, and I'm the main person at my firm who handles legal matters for the city.

A week before the election, I met with then-candidate Mike Norris and Acting City Manager Lauren Johnston. Mr. Norris shared some of his priorities. He also asked for a recall roster of all essential employees. He also asked, "How can I fire some of these people?" — specifically referring to Chief of Staff Jason DeLorenzo. The mayor seemed fixated on the idea of Jason being at the top of a "spider web" of corruption and implied that all the decisions Jason made were somehow corrupt and didn't benefit the city. I explained to Mr. Norris that only the City Council could fire the City Attorney and the City Manager, and that the City Manager has the authority to hire and fire everyone else.

Whenever a new mayor and council members take office, they receive training on their roles and duties. I always make sure they understand that they can only hire and fire the City Attorney and the City Manager, and they can't remove other city staff. They're aware of this before they even sit on the dais. I believe HR also gives them some training, and the Florida League of Cities offered introductory training as well.

I also heard about the comment regarding Brittany Kershaw's toenails. Brittany didn't want anything to happen, but the comment became public in response to a public records request.

I also heard a report that Mayor Norris yelled at the public affairs team about the Palm Coast Christmas Parade. I suggested that Lauren speak to him directly about the situation, and I believe that the mayor eventually apologized and resolved the situation.

There was a time when Mayor Norris told me, "You've got to help me convince Lauren to fire Jason. He's at the top of the spiderweb of corruption." I told Mayor Norris if he has evidence against Jason then he needs to provide that evidence to Lauren. I also told Mayor Norris that the City Manager could not be ordered to fire any city employee because that's her decision, not his, to make.

The mayor did give Lauren and the City Attorney a document showing this "spiderweb," with Jason at the top. One of the supervisors was fired for letting people clock out early, and some employees who were involved were suspended.

At the time, I thought we were learning how to work together better. But things kept happening that caused tension.

One Sunday night, I received a text at around 9 or 10 pm asking me to join a conference call at 9 am the next morning. I called just before 9 am, and to my knowledge, it was just the

Mayor, Lauren, Jason, and me on the call. The mayor told us, “This is going to be a one-way conversation. I have lost faith in your ability to lead this city. I’m going to ask for your resignations, including senior staff. I’ll be bringing this up to the City Council. I know I can’t fire you, but I am asking for your resignation.” I asked him who this was directed at, and he said Lauren and Jason. I asked if it was directed at me, and he said no. He mentioned a recent meeting and said the city was corrupt and that Jason was at the top of it. He also said that Lauren needed to resign — not be fired — because if she was fired, she could go back to being Assistant City Manager.

He also stated on the call that he would be asking senior staff to resign or words to that effect. I wasn’t sure what he meant by “senior staff,” but I did call him back and told him that Lauren could be brought to the City Council, but Jason couldn’t, since he’s not a Charter Officer and isn’t subject to being fired. I told the mayor that he could probably ask for Lauren’s resignation once, but no more than that.

Mayor Norris didn’t bring this up at the next City Council meeting, and I think he thought it was resolved. I checked in with Lauren the day after the phone call happened, and she said that Mayor Norris was in a joking mood with her and acted like nothing serious had happened. The mayor acted like everything was fine again.

When this investigation started, Mayor Norris told me that he didn’t want to meet with Lauren anymore.

We’re in the process of hiring a permanent City Manager, and I believe someone should be hired soon.

I also heard about a resident harassing or texting Jason. Jason often gets blamed for a lot of the problems in Palm Coast. The mayor’s supporters seem to like blaming him for everything.

Lauren Johnston informed me that Mayor Norris stormed into a meeting and asked, “Why is Jeff Douglas here? He should not be allowed in this building.” Lauren was really upset by this. I recommended to Lauren that she should discuss with the Mayor her concerns on how he acted at the meeting.

I know the mayor campaigned on reducing staff, which has created some fear among city employees, though it’s not directed at any one individual. When the Mayor first met with Lauren and I, he requested a recall roster of all essential employees of the City. Lauren was not familiar with the military terminology “recall” so I helped explain what the Mayor was requesting.

I told the mayor three times that he couldn’t interfere with city employees or Jason: once right before the November 5, 2024 election in City Hall, again during the December meeting when he asked for help to convince Lauren to fire Jason, and a third time after the March 10 call.

**ENCLOSURE 8**

**Summary of Interview of Ed Danko  
April 1, 2025**

*[Mr. Danko declined to provide a statement for this investigation but provided a copy of a complaint that he filed against Mayor Norris with Florida Commission on Ethics. A copy of the complaint is attached as Enclosure 20.]*

## **ENCLOSURE 9**

### **Summary of Interview of Paul Rice April 3, 2024**

I'm Paul Rice, and I was the Director of Real Estate Development with Raydient, LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Rayonier. Rayonier is the largest landowner with property available to the City of Palm Coast.

At one point, Mayor Norris invited me to attend a meeting with a small group of other developers. During that meeting, he expressed his vision for transforming Palm Coast—shifting it from what he described as a retirement community into a more thriving one with expanded industrial and residential development. He said he needed help from the development community to make that vision a reality.

Somewhere in the course of that conversation, Mayor Norris made it clear that he blamed both developers and city staff for many of Palm Coast's past failures. He also mentioned that some personnel changes would need to happen in order for progress to be made.

Mayor Norris later visited Wildlight, in Nassau County, to see firsthand the results of close cooperation between developers and local government. In that meeting—or possibly in both meetings—he made specific comments about Ray Tyner and Jason DeLorenzo, claiming they were involved in collusion with developers. He said that was part of the reason why he believed changes within the city were necessary. He also gave the impression that he had some sort of working relationship with Lauren Johnston, though I didn't get the full context of that.

In the same conversations, he questioned the usefulness or viability of the city's marketing team. He didn't name anyone specifically, but he expressed some general skepticism about their effectiveness. He also voiced concerns about the Utility Department. At one point, he asked me for my opinion of Jason DeLorenzo. I told him the truth: that I think Jason is one of the smartest and most capable public servants working in Palm Coast, and that he's done a lot to help the city run effectively. Mayor Norris told me he had a very different view of Jason.

## **ENCLOSURE 10**

### **Summary of Interview of Kyle Berryhill April 4, 2024**

My name is Kyle Berryhill, and I currently serve as the Fire Chief for the City of Palm Coast. I have been with the Fire Department since 2005 and have served as Fire Chief for the past two and a half years. In that capacity, I am the highest-ranking public safety official in the city.

I believe that when there is an opportunity to ensure things are being done properly and legally, it is my responsibility as a leader to do the right thing—even when it's difficult. The City of Palm Coast has faced its share of challenges recently, but I believe there is an opportunity for us to get back on the right path.

After the most recent mayoral election, the newly elected mayor met with the city's executive team to introduce himself and discuss his vision. He stated that he intended to be different and emphasized a desire to review city council actions and follow up on executing policy. During that meeting, the mayor expressed concerns about the city's response to Hurricane Milton. He claimed that widespread flooding had occurred and said that we needed to fix those problems rather than celebrate our response or "pat ourselves on the back."

I spoke up and agreed that there were certainly lessons to be learned, as highlighted in our After Action Review. However, I also pointed out that Palm Coast fared significantly better than many neighboring jurisdictions—some of which experienced fatalities during the storm. In that meeting, the mayor came close to issuing direct operational direction but did not cross the line.

In Palm Coast, we are accustomed to newly elected officials experiencing a learning curve as they adjust to the council-manager form of government. In our system, the City Council hires and fires only the City Manager and the City Attorney. It also approves the budget, authorizes purchases over specific thresholds, and sets policy direction. Council members are not permitted to coordinate outside of publicly noticed meetings, and no single council member—including the mayor—has authority to provide direction to staff outside the consensus of the full council. This structure is designed to keep government operations apolitical and protect both the elected officials and staff. Staff relies on a process driven by majority decision-making; when three of five council members agree, that constitutes direction for the city.

At some point after the mayor took office, I became aware of interactions he had with the Communications team. I was told he made inappropriate comments, including a remark about "toenails," and harshly criticized the city's Facebook livestream of a parade. I T

The mayor later gave explicit direction that staff should not interact with representatives of the Douglas Team—a developer group associated with Jeff Douglas—

because of pending litigation against the city. In an executive team meeting, the mayor stated that he had heard members of the Douglas Team had entered city property without properly signing in and expressed his frustration, saying, “They are suing us for \$12 million. They’re not our friends.”

In response, several senior staff members—Ray Tyner, Jason DeLorenzo, and Lauren Johnston—explained to the mayor that no special treatment had been given. The Douglas Team had attended a standard Technical Review Committee meeting and were entitled to meet with city staff as part of routine operations, despite the ongoing lawsuit.

I maintain professional working relationships with many city employees, including the Interim City Manager. We share mutual respect and often exchange ideas and discuss challenges. Since the mayor’s election, the Interim City Manager has shared with me on several occasions how difficult it has been to establish a working relationship with him—particularly in light of his demand that she terminate the Chief of Staff. I advised her that demonstrating competence is the best way to earn the trust of elected officials and that such trust is the foundation for a productive relationship.

One day, she called me, visibly shaken, and said she had just endured a terrible day. She told me the mayor had summoned her and Jason DeLorenzo into a private meeting where he declared that he was going to fire them and demanded their resignations. Although I was disturbed, I was not entirely surprised by this report.

At a separate meeting held at the fire station, I reiterated to the mayor that I report to the City Manager. The mayor expressed frustration with Lauren Johnston and said she had violated his trust earlier that week. I responded that the most constructive action he could take would be to encourage the Council to appoint a permanent City Manager. I also shared my belief that Lauren is a valuable and dedicated asset who genuinely wants to work collaboratively with the mayor.

To date, the mayor has not directly attempted to interfere with fire department operations. He has requested information and updates, which we have appropriately routed through the City Manager.

I remain hopeful that the mayor will ultimately understand and embrace his role’s responsibilities and limitations. In our system, the mayor and City Council set the policy direction, and city staff carry it out. It is critical that we all operate in a manner consistent with the City Charter.

I understand that the role of mayor can be difficult and, at times, counterintuitive. I believe deeply in the City of Palm Coast, in our employees, and in our community. If the mayor is successful in fulfilling his role as envisioned by the Charter, then we will continue to have a strong and thriving city.

## **ENCLOSURE 11**

### **Summary of Interview of Jeff Douglas April 7, 2024**

My name is Jeff Douglas. For context, our company and others we work for to include the original investor of Town Center, ALLETE Energy have been investing and creating jobs in what is now Palm Coast since 1997. These entities and my predecessors have donated everything from the land and site development for City Hall, Central Park, school sites, four lane roads, building interchanges, gifting water well sites, fire stations, dozens of miles of sewer pipe and thousands of acres of parks, preserves and conservation land. We've helped create a solid & sustainable tax base for Palm Coast. The city's revenues jumped from \$160 million in 2017 to over \$400 million today. We are blessed to have been a part of the humble investors, families, companies and citizens that played a big role in making that happen.

Thus, prior to Mr. Norris's election and for nearly two months after we made numerous and ongoing attempts to meet with the Mayor and brief him on the progress & success of Town Center's commercial and job creation efforts to include landing the 200,000sf data center, groundbreaking of the 50,000 sf Promenade and another 20,000-sf medical complex among others. Each ask was either ignored, deflected or declined. Eventually in January we asked to be put on his weekly office calendar. Our goal, as always, was to come alongside the mayor's stated objective with an arm full of color elevations, site plans, plats and exhibits. I wanted to speak with him as one executive to another executive.

Unfortunately, he walked out when we walked in and was gone for approximately 10 minutes. When he did walk in, he blurted out, "What are you hustling us for now? The Douglas Boys do nothing but take from this city". I responded that I don't understand. With that I explained that we ask for nothing. I simply wanted to brief him on some history and to see how we can assist him in meeting his vision of commercial and industrial development. It's imperative that he needs to be successful for the City to continue to create jobs and remain one of the lowest taxed cities in the state. Mayor Norris refused to look at any of the exhibits and rejected my attempts to explain the current commercial & job creation status of Town Center with "I don't give a shit about Town Center. You can build 10 story apartments for all I care."

When I shifted to Palm Coast Park and stated that we worked for over a year with Staff, Council Member Pontieri and Jason DeLorenzo to add to the DRI nearly 700 more acres of Industrial to the Palm Coast Park DRI, the mayor threw up his hand and blurted out "I don't give a shit about what you gave in the past. This is my city now and that fucking Jason DeLorenzo, I'm going to fire his fucking ass the first chance I get. And after that I am going to fire Lauren." He said that he was going to put his Army buddy in the City Manager position and then go after the Department Heads. Frustrated at my failures, I offered that a new leader needs the best information and real time data possible. I am sure your friend will need a problem solver across many areas.

He interrupted with "You guys are in bed with the city staff." I attempted to correct the mayor and told him that we are constantly locking horns with staff on numerous issues and the rare meeting with Jason DeLorenzo generally involves the city demanding extractions that have nothing to do with our efforts. He blurted out that he didn't "give a shit about any of that." I made another attempt and stated that Johnson is working days, nights, weekends and was told she doesn't even want to be the City Manager. I would consider her a dream employee/servant. Sadly, the meeting digressed from there...

With that said, I have no ill will toward the mayor. Personally, I just feel sorry for him. For safety reasons, we have directed employees and vendors to avoid and not engage with the mayor.



## **ENCLOSURE 12**

### **Summary of Interview of Patrick Appolonia April 14, 2025**

My name is Patrick Appolonia. I've been with the Communications and Marketing Department since September 2021. My official title is Multimedia Associate, and I handle communications for all city departments—from Public Works to Utilities, to Stormwater, and even for Mayor Norris and City Council.

I've worked with various City Council members and one previous mayor, and I honestly can't express enough how bad things have become since Mayor Norris took office. He has made it incredibly difficult for us to do our jobs every single day.

When the first complaint about him surfaced, I really hoped it was a one-off situation. But since then, I've spoken to many city employees who have expressed serious problems with the mayor. Every interaction with him feels combative. People go out of their way to avoid him and are extremely cautious not to get on his bad side. Even though they remain polite and professional, there's a real sense of fear, which is then expressed by those individuals once he leaves. It's very much a Stockholm Syndrome-type atmosphere around the office.

Mayor Norris constantly refers to his own "team," but no one knows who he's talking about. It's not like he's the President and has a handpicked cabinet or anything like that since our government is not set up that way. He keeps talking about widespread "corruption," yet never provides any real evidence to support these claims. He also claimed he ran for office because someone shamed his family name. I also have no idea what that means. The common thread is that he always appears to be fighting against something - some system that is supposedly against him and him alone. His supporters seem to take to this character he has created for himself.

What alarms me most is that he's turned that narrative into fuel for his supporters—some of whom now direct their anger and accusations toward us in the department. We regularly hear people calling us "corrupt" or accusing us of undermining him. That could not be further from the truth. We are simply trying to do our jobs. He weaponizes his social media to paint himself as the victim of circumstance and characterize himself as being in an embattled state constantly.

This year's State of the City address was a complete whirlwind. Our department normally handles everything—setting up the event, live streaming, taking photos, arranging catering, managing the technical aspects—you name it. But going into the event this year, we were completely in the dark. Mayor Norris refused to communicate with us about anything. We didn't even know if he would show up to speak until about ten minutes before the event began. We had to prepare the Vice Mayor just in case. He didn't even acknowledge the high school girl who sang the national anthem and used his speech to slander those that fired HR

complaints against him, claiming us to be controlled by organizations that promoted us to file our complaints.

If any regular city employee used his kind of language, they'd be fired on the spot. For example, he used expletives to describe Pierre Tristam from FlaglerLive and claimed that we don't need him around when he was in our office for a meeting. We're constantly worried about what he'll say if we talk to someone or do something that doesn't align with what he wants. In a video he shot with media outlet Flagler County Buzz, he alluded again to corruption, corrupt employees, being able to find corruption is he was able to seize the cell phones of city employees, etc. Again, he provides no evidence. He proceeded to reference his middle finger several times throughout the video for reasons unknown.

His lying is another major issue. He lies about things that are so small and unnecessary. Just recently, he pulled up to City Hall and moved most all his belongings out of the office. Any council member can use that office. Once word got out, he changed the story and claimed he had "only taken a few things," and claimed the reasoning was because we were shooting a video in his office and he did not want his things damaged. No video has been shot in that office in months, so his statement is perplexing but it one that has made the rounds and has been shared by his supporters. If you tell lies long enough, they become the truth and in his case, he has been able to do this very effectively as it pertains to influencing his supporters. He seems to take their trust for granted, because he can.

For a long time, I kept hoping something would change. I genuinely hoped he would use the State of the City as an opportunity to hit the reset button—to recalibrate. But that didn't happen. In fact, it was the opposite. At this point, I must accept that this is simply who he is and that he seems to like being the isolated lone wolf fighting against the corrupt system, when in fact there is no corruption.

I want the public to know that the accusations of corruption against city staff are completely baseless and slanderous. I don't understand why he keeps saying it but I really think it would be in his best interest to stop. Everyone is working hard to do the best job possible for Palm Coast. But Mayor Norris seems intent on tearing that down for reasons that make no sense other than to rile up his supporters. He seems to carry a "guilty until proven innocent" sentiment toward anyone that is not in his immediate circle and his supporters follow suit. If those same supporters actually knew us, they would know that there isn't a shred of truth in what he says. It's disheartening to see his lies perpetuated and believed.

The atmosphere at work is stressful. There's a constant sense of volatility, not knowing what the mayor might say or do next or who he's talking to behind the scenes. It's draining, and it prevents people from doing their best work. His comments to HR about dictating who he feels should be hired based on age was a grave overstep of the city's charter, discriminatory, and open's the city up for lawsuits, which I don't believe should be taken lightly.

I've seen plenty of elected officials with a varying array of strong political opinions who were still able to do their jobs effectively and abide by good governance as dictated by

our charter. That's not the case here. I truly don't know what the mayor's endgame is. My only guess is that he is attempting to put pressure on the administrative staff to do what he wants, fire who he wants, or threaten their jobs if they don't follow through, despite the fact that he has little to no understanding of the workforce tasks conducted by our departments or their responsibilities.

I would genuinely like to work with him as I would any Mayor. However, it is not possible with someone like him - at least not for any extended period of time. He believes people need to adjust to him—and if someone has a problem with him, then it's on them. He has said this, almost verbatim. It is textbook narcissism, which makes for constant shifts in behavior as a means to seize control. It is not healthy or productive for anyone.

## **ENCLOSURE 13**

### **Summary of Interview of Mike Norris April 15, 2025**

My name is Mike Norris, and I currently serve as the Mayor of the City of Palm Coast.

One of my primary concerns since taking office has been the abuse of Florida's Sunshine Law. I have observed city staff communicating with individual Council Members in silos. For example, how would Council Member Charles Gambaro know about a private conversation I had with the City Manager? That conversation was inappropriately shared, which should not happen under a government that is supposed to operate transparently. If Council Members are privy to my private conversations with the City Manager or City Attorney, then I should be privy to theirs.

There has been a lot of confusion surrounding a conversation I had with Lauren Johnston and Jason DeLorenzo. I want to be clear: I did not demand their resignations. City Attorney Marcus Duffy was on the phone during the conversation and may have assumed I was demanding they resign. That was not my intent. I never instructed Lauren to fire Jason, and I did not tell Marcus Duffy that he needed to resign either, though it's possible he interpreted my remarks that way.

Based on my notes, what I said was: *"I have lost confidence in both of you as senior staff employees of the city, and I, as a singular member of the council, request your immediate resignation and I will be conveying my sentiments to the rest of the council during the next workshop on Tuesday. The good news is there are other Senior members of the staff as well that I would also request their resignation, but we are in the middle of the hiring process for a new CM and they are for the most part needed personnel to keep the city functioning."* These are roughly my notes in which I read from. I fixed some grammar and spelling errors, but nothing else for this statement.

I requested their resignations, but I did not demand them. I later decided not to bring up the issue at that Tuesday's meeting, because I was prepared to move on. However, Council Member Gambaro raised the matter himself during the meeting. Which I believe constitutes a violation of the Sunshine Law. He should never have been privy to my private conversation with the acting City Manager.

As the Mayor, I believe I have the right to request a resignation when I lose confidence in a staff member. In fact, approximately a week after Council Member Gambaro insisted on an investigation, Mr. Blocker himself told me that he believed I had done nothing wrong. That said, I recognize I do not have the authority to terminate employees, and I have never claimed otherwise.

I believe the City Council violated the Charter when it appointed Council Member Gambaro. Ms. Heigher had not yet reached the halfway point in her term. Under the Charter,

the Council may appoint a replacement, but only to serve until the next regularly scheduled election—in this case, November. The former council did not take the appropriate actions to send the seat to the ballot. One of their reasons was that there was not enough time for candidates to collect the petitions needed to qualify. Our charter has a built in remedy for such cases. That remedy is to pay the fee to qualify for the ballot. An election for the District 4 seat was the only legal option.

City Attorney Marcus Duffy issued a legal opinion to the Council on August 19, 2024, advising them to wait until after the election to appoint someone. This too was a wrong opinion. However, after I won the primary election on August 20, that opinion changed, and Mr. Gambaro was appointed on October 1. I expressed to Marcus and his supervisor, Jeremiah Blocker, that I disagreed with that legal opinion and believed Marcus misunderstood the Charter. That disagreement may have led Marcus to believe I was requesting his resignation as well, though I did not do so.

I contacted the Secretary of State's office in regard to this matter. \*I was told that I should fire the City Attorney for incompetence. I was also advised that they could not do anything to help, because it is a local issue.

We are on track to accumulate over half a billion dollars in debt by October, largely due to poor planning and mismanagement of our wastewater infrastructure. I have asked whether we have the wastewater capacity to support 19,000 new homes, which are already approved and in the queue to be built, and was told that we do not. I believe the city has allowed development to outpace infrastructure without adequate checks. I have been clear that I will not vote for additional bonds for wastewater infrastructure without a moratorium on residential development.

In my view, staff have allowed developers to operate unchecked. These developers are not providing enough value to the community and are receiving little pushback from city leadership. Staff are also interacting with Council Members in silos, which undermines good governance.

I have a candid and dry sense of humor, and I realize that it may not land the same way with everyone. I was raised in a different generation. I'm a Gen-X'er, and I don't like to tiptoe around issues. Millennials may not appreciate that style, but it's how I lead.

I made a comment about toenail polish during orientation and a photo shoot. Someone said I dropped an F-bomb in the Council Chambers, but I highly doubt that. The comment referenced an actual nail polish color called "Trash Can Green." It was not meant to offend. I was genuinely asking if that was the color. I, in fact, did explain at that time that it was a real color. The same applies to a lighthearted remark I made about Lauren Johnston's outfit. I said it looked like a Hillary Clinton pantsuit. I was kidding around with her. I have also given her genuine compliments before and have always tried to be respectful.

At one point, I joked with Lauren, asking, "What are you going to do when I hire Anna Gibson?" She replied that she would quit. It was a passing joke, and I did not take it seriously.

Regarding an interaction with the Communications & Marketing Department after a Christmas Parade video, I said: “I’m sorry I upset you. I’m just kidding. In the grand scheme of things, I don’t really care about a video of a parade. I’m not trying to degrade your service. It’s just a crappy video.” They seemed to be fine with that explanation.

I was an HR manager in the U.S. Army and later served as an installation security officer (GS-11) at Kings Bay Submarine Base. I’ve managed staff of more than 300 people, including military and civilian employees, and have never had an HR complaint filed against me. I also hold a master’s degree in Human Resources Management.

Once, I made a comment that older employees cost more in benefits. That was a factual observation—not a directive. I never instructed the HR department to hire or fire anyone. I was simply pointing out that a younger workforce tends to cost less.

I also requested a list of “essential personnel” and received a list that included all 600 employees. That didn’t make sense to me. I explained to Lauren and others what I meant—essential personnel should be narrowly defined.

A local official once confided in me about the work ethic of certain employees. I later shared that with Lauren Johnston. That official then called and asked why I shared a private conversation. In hindsight, I can see how that created tension. At the time, I thought Lauren and I were building a better working relationship. If I were in a strong-mayor system, I might have fired her for that breach, but I did not have that authority.

Developers have been trying to influence me since before I was sworn in—Jeff Douglas among them. One day, while outside City Hall, I saw Jeff walking out of the building. During a subsequent meeting, I said that people shouldn’t be walking into the building like they own the place and that we should be logging visitors. I did not tell anyone to prohibit Jeff Douglas or his team from entering City Hall. My point was about ensuring we follow proper protocols.

Jeff Douglas later claimed I said I would fire Jason. That is not true. As the Mayor, I cannot fire anyone, and I never claimed otherwise.

When it comes to developers, I’ve consistently drawn a hard line. I accepted less than \$26,000 in campaign contributions and only \$1,000 in PAC money near the end of my campaign. I won with 63% of the vote. I refused to take developer money, and that has made me unpopular in certain circles. I’m not playing their game, and they don’t like it. They just want to build homes—often low quality—and move on.

During the State of the City address, I was isolated from the rest of the program. I still delivered remarks based on my honest assessment of where the city stands. I believe we are in financial jeopardy, and it’s being downplayed.

I do not want resources dedicated to personal image or promotion. For instance, I told the Communications Department that I didn't need someone following me with a camera. I'm not that kind of leader. I have my campaign manager on retainer, and I use my own page for updates. I've told staff I don't even want the city to spend money on a paperclip for me.

At this point, I only enter the building during official hours. I removed my personal items from my office after I noticed they had been moved around—likely for a video. That felt disrespectful. I understand it's a City Council office, but I'm the only member who maintains regular office hours.

With regard to former Council Member Ed Danko's complaint, I want to clarify that I never told Mr. Blocker—or anyone else—to "go after" my enemies. I simply asked for a referral to a personal attorney so I could explore my options in regard to a defamation case I was mulling over against Mr Danko and Mr Lowe. After thinking it over, and in light of winning the election even after their actions, I decided to let it go. That is all that was. How exactly would Mr. Danko, a former council member, have any information about my private conversations with the city attorney?

We have two external candidates for the City Manager position—both of them are retired military officers. I will work with whomever is appointed. If the City Council wants me to focus solely on policy, I will do so. I also have no problem working with the Communications & Marketing Department going forward. I only ask that people bring complaints directly to me.

Many city employees like me. I try to engage with them as often as possible. In my career, I have always given any new team or command 90 days before making judgments or decisions.

I want to build a working relationship with everyone. My office is always open. If someone has a concern, they should talk to me.

 Back

I have lost confidence in both of you as senior staff employees of the city and I as a singular member of the council I request your immediate resignation and I will be conveyed my sentiments to the rest of the council during the next workshop on Tuesday. The good news is there's other Senior members of the staff as well that I would also request their resignation, but we are in the middle of the hiring process for a new CM and they are for the most part needed personal to keep the city functioning.







# city of PALM COAST

Administrative Services & Economic Development  
Communications & Marketing Division

160 Lake Avenue  
Palm Coast, FL 32164  
386-986-3708

November 15, 2024

Dear Renina,

On November 13, 2024, I met with Mayor-elect Norris to take his official City of Palm Coast portrait and introduce him to the Communications & Marketing Department alongside Multimedia Associates Patrick Appolonia and Terrence Muir. We discussed the department's role in supporting the Mayor, including speech writing, event coordination, and media coverage, while taking photos outside and in City Council Chambers.

During the session, Mayor-elect Norris made an inappropriate comment about the color of my toenail polish, calling it "fucking trash bag," which I found alarming. When discussing the department's services, he dismissed them, stating he had his own marketing team and praising his campaign manager, Chase. In private, the two employees who were present later expressed concern to me that they feared for their jobs due to his comments about not needing the Communications team.

Sincerely,

Brittany Kershaw  
Director of Communications & Marketing  
City of Palm Coast



November 15, 2024

On Wednesday, November 13 at 11am, several members of the Communications and Marketing department, which included Brittany Kershaw, Terrence Muir and myself, along with Administration Staff Member Kendra Ianotti, met with Mayor-Elect Michael Norris as part of a brief introductory meeting which allowed us the chance to discuss the work we do for the city. This also served as a time for me to take an official headshot photograph of Mr. Norris for use on all future city-wide communications. Upon meeting Mr. Norris, his temperament was immediately unreceptive, combative and reluctant to achieve any type of rapport with the members of our department, despite our best efforts to do so. He was even dismissive to our explanation of city communications as it pertains to him, and our willingness to help with official city communications, as he stated that he has his own marketing team and would not need our services. His sentiment remained the same for the duration of our approximately 10 minutes together, which saw us visit the community wing for his headshot. Upon finishing this process, Terrence Muir and I began to walk ahead and leave the remaining members of the group when Mr. Norris asked Brittany Kershaw "what color is that?" Unaware of what he was speaking of, Ms. Kershaw asked what he was referring to. He explained that he was referring to her toe nail polish on her feet. Ms. Kershaw responded "blue," to which Mr. Norris responded "is that fucking trash can color..." before trailing off. Ms. Kershaw was understandably at a loss for words. Mr. Norris then looked to Ms. Ianotti and said "what's next" as if to discard our group promptly. In my opinion, based on the entirety of our time together, this was a clear case of verbal harassment on behalf of Mr. Norris that was meant to intimidate and demean Ms. Kershaw, while also trying to gauge her reaction as a means of instilling control.

My intent for writing this statement is to report and preserve this occurrence of harassment, as I feel it is of the utmost importance that we do so in order to preserve the safety, wellbeing and productivity of our employees, and our community members. Based on this occurrence, and other occurrences that I have witnessed previously during which then-candidate Mr. Norris has audibly made profane, vulgar, defamatory remarks overhead by myself and others within the confines of the community wing at City Hall, I would be remiss to not mention that I fear that if this interaction and these other instances are any indicator, it's not a question of whether this will happen again, but when it will happen. Thank you for your time and consideration in reading this memo and please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or need for clarification you may have as it pertains to the aforementioned occurrence.

Sincerely,



Patrick Appolonia

Communications and Marketing

November 15, 2024

On Thursday, November 14, 2024, Brittany Kershaw, Director of Communications and Marketing, came to the human resources office. Ms. Kershaw wanted to tell me what Mayor-elect Mike Norris said to her during a photo shoot on Wednesday, November 13, 2024.

Brittany and her team, Patrick Appolonia and Terrence Muir, had been outside taking pictures of Mr. Norris for the wall in the community wing hallway. They decided to come into the council chambers for some inside pictures. As Mr. Norris and Ms. Kershaw walked down the center aisle Mr. Norris said to Ms. Kershaw, "What color is that?" Ms. Kershaw answered, "What, the carpet?" Then Mr. Norris said, "No your toes". Then Ms. Kershaw said, "light blue" and Mr. Norris replied, "is that fucking trash bag color...?" Ms. Kershaw was shocked at what she heard and replied, "What?". Then Mr. Norris said, "You know, paint colors can have weird names".

On November 15, 2024, I reached out to Mr. Appolonia and Mr. Muir to see if they heard Mr. Norris' comments and if so, if would they provide me with a statement. I have received a statement from Ms. Kershaw and Mr. Appolonia.

Mr. Norris was sworn in as the new Mayor of Palm Coast on November 19, 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Renina Fuller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Renina Fuller  
Director of Human Resources

**From:** Shannon P. Martin <[SPMartin@palmcoastgov.com](mailto:SPMartin@palmcoastgov.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, December 16, 2024 3:55 PM

**To:** Renina Fuller, M.A., SHRM-CP <[RFuller@palmcoastgov.com](mailto:RFuller@palmcoastgov.com)>

**Subject:** Incident Report Regarding Interaction with Mayor Mike Norris on 12/16/2024

I am writing to formally document an incident involving Mayor Mike Norris that occurred on December 16, 2024, both before and during my department's weekly meeting. These incidents created a disruptive and uncomfortable environment for my team, including our new hire, Tiana Hernandez.

Prior to our meeting, Terrence Muir brought to my attention that he had been stopped in the hallway by Mayor Norris as he was walking toward his desk. The Mayor asked Terrence who was responsible for the live stream of the parade. Terrence informed him that the Communications and Marketing Department was responsible, to which the Mayor responded, "Well, it was garbage." After a pause, he yelled in an exaggerated tone, "Garbage."

This exchange occurred in the hallway in front of Sheera Jackson, an employee from another department. Terrence told me he felt incredibly uncomfortable due to the tone and public nature of the interaction. I planned to bring this to my Director's attention after our department meeting.

During our meeting, which began at 3:00 PM in the Pine Lakes Conference Room at City Hall, myself, Terrence, and Tiana were discussing the Starlight Parade from the past weekend. I was congratulating the team on successfully utilizing our new multi-channel streaming service for only the second time and highlighting areas for improvement.

While I was speaking, Mayor Norris passed by the door and gestured, indicating he intended to enter the room. After initially being unable to open the door, he successfully gained access on his second attempt.

Upon entering, the Mayor, in a raised voice, demanded, "Who is responsible for that live stream of the parade?" I sought clarification by asking which parade he was referring to, as there were two over the weekend. He replied, "That Starlight Parade, who is responsible for the camera?"

When I began to explain that the live stream was a department-wide effort, he cut me off and started yelling: "It sucked, it was trash, it looked like horse shit." No one in the room responded, and the atmosphere became tense. He then asked, "You're going to tell me that you think it looked good?"

Terrence attempted to respond by suggesting, “Well, we could try another camera.” The Mayor replied, “I ain’t buying another damn camera,” and then turned back to me, yelling, “I don’t wanna hear excuses. Fix it!”

The exchange visibly unsettled everyone in the room. Mayor Norris appeared uncomfortable after his outburst, laughed awkwardly, and left the room.

This incident was particularly disheartening for Tiana Hernandez, as it was her first day of work and her first interaction with the Mayor. The unprofessional nature of the exchange derailed our meeting and made it difficult to continue.

The combined incidents—Terrence’s earlier uncomfortable hallway exchange with the Mayor and the outburst during the meeting—demonstrate a pattern of behavior that disrupted my team’s ability to work effectively. I felt it was important to bring this matter to your attention, as these interactions created a negative and unprofessional environment.

Please let me know if further details or clarification are needed.

Sincerely,

**Shannon P. Martin**

Communications & Marketing Manager

160 Lake Avenue

Palm Coast, FL 32164

**Tel:** [386-986-2484](tel:386-986-2484)

[www.palmcoast.gov](http://www.palmcoast.gov)



**How are we doing?**

**Let us know below.**

**[PalmCoast.gov/feedback](http://PalmCoast.gov/feedback)**

**From:** Patrick Buckley  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 26, 2025 12:40 PM  
**To:** Renina Fuller, M.A., SHRM-CP <[RFuller@palmcoastgov.com](mailto:RFuller@palmcoastgov.com)>  
**Subject:** Information

On 02/24/25 at 10:45 a.m. I placed a call to Mr. Charles Hanger at 386-503-0305 regarding an issue he was having with his contractor for a window and door permit (Permit 2024071114). At the time of my call, Mr. Hanger indicated he was actually coming to City Hall to see me about the issue. He described an issue whereas his contractor instructed him that some termite damaged framing needed to be replaced before they could install the windows and now that he completed the repairs, the contractor is telling him the work is incorrect, and they will not install the windows. Mr. Hanger indicated he was frustrated by what his contractor was telling him and needed assistance from me.

On Mr. Hanger's arrival at City Hall, he asked for me and Nicole DiMattina came to get me. When I got to the front office, Nicole indicated Mr. Hanger went to his car to get his cell phone and he would return. When Mr. Hanger returned and I was in the front office, I observed through the front windows to the hallway he was just a few steps behind Mayor Norris who had also entered the building and was proceeding towards the elevator. Mr. Hanger stopped to converse with the Mayor as the Mayor was entering the elevator. I could see Mr. Hansen gesturing towards the Building Department presumably indicating to the Mayor the purpose of his visit – but I do not know this for certain. At the same time, City employee Josh Munson, exited the hallway where the employee bathrooms and mail room are located and began walking towards the Building Division door. As he opened the door and entered, I heard Mayor Norris state to Mr. Hanger as he too was turning and began walking towards the Building Department entry: "Let me know if he gives you any shit". Josh Munson can verify this as he heard Mayor Norris say it and understood who the person was who Mayor Norris said it to.

Mr. Hanger and I completed our discussion in the front office area of the Building Division and while he seemed frustrated with the information I provided him, he was courteous and thanked me and departed. He did return briefly within a minute and I was called to the front again to answer a couple more questions which I did and he again thanked me and departed.

**Patrick Buckley**  
Chief Building Official  
160 Lake Avenue  
Palm Coast, FL 32164  
**Tel:** 386-986-3786  
[www.palmcoast.gov](http://www.palmcoast.gov)



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**Florida Commission on Ethics**  
P.O. Drawer 15709, Tallahassee, Florida 32317-5709  
"A Public Office is a Public Trust"

# COMPLAINT

### 1. PERSON BRINGING COMPLAINT:

Name: Edward Danko Telephone: 214-516-5029

Address: 56 Wasserman Drive

City: Palm Coast County: Flagler State: Florida ZIP: 32164

### 2. PERSON AGAINST WHOM COMPLAINT IS BROUGHT:

Use a separate complaint form for each person against whom you are filing a complaint.

Name: Michael Norris Telephone: 386-264-9164

Address: 2 Lema Pl

City: Palm Coast County: Flagler State: Florida ZIP: 32137

Title of office or position held or sought: Mayor, Palm Coast, Florida

### 3. STATEMENT OF FACTS:

Please provide a full explanation of your complaint, describing the facts and the actions of the person named above and why you believe he or she violated the law, and include a statement of how you became aware of these facts. Include relevant dates and the names and addresses of people whom you believe may be witnesses. Please do not submit more than 15 pages, including this form. Please do not submit video or audio tapes, CD, DVDs, flash drives, or other electronic media; such material will not be considered part of the complaint and will be returned.

### 4. OATH:

I, the person bringing this complaint, do swear or affirm that the facts set forth in the foregoing complaint and attachments thereto are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

STATE OF Florida  
COUNTY OF Flagler

Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me by means of  physical presence or  online notarization,

this 31 day of March, 2025,

by Edward Danko

(name of person making statement)

Janet Eason  
(Signature of Notary Public)



(Print, Type, or Stamp Commissioned Name of Notary Public)

Personally Known \_\_\_\_\_ OR Produced Identification

Type of Identification Produced: FL DL

[Signature]  
SIGNATURE OF COMPLAINANT

## **COMPLAINT OF ED DANKO**

### **Former Vice-Mayor and City Council Member, Palm Coast, Florida**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This complaint is submitted by former Vice-Mayor and City Councilman Ed Danko, in response to a series of unfounded, defamatory, and potentially unlawful actions taken by Palm Coast Mayor Michael "Mike" Norris, both prior to and following his assumption of office. These actions constitute an abuse of power, a violation of state law and City Charter provisions, and an attempt to erode public trust in city governance.

#### **FACTUAL BACKGROUND**

Shortly after November 5, 2024, following Election Day, Mayor-Elect Michael Norris attended a standard post-election orientation briefing with senior City of Palm Coast staff, including Acting City Manager Lauren Johnston and City Attorney Jeremiah Blocker of the Douglas Law Firm.

At that meeting, Mayor-Elect Norris directed Attorney Blocker to initiate lawsuits against individuals Norris labeled as his "political enemies." The list included myself, then Vice-Mayor Ed Danko, as well as Mayor David Alfin and Councilman Nick Klufas.

Attorney Blocker appropriately informed Mr. Norris that the City Attorney does not represent the Mayor individually, but rather serves the City of Palm Coast as a corporate entity and takes direction from the full City Council, as prescribed under Article IV, Section 7(a) of the Palm Coast City Charter.

Despite this, Mayor-Elect Norris persisted, demanding legal action without offering any evidence of wrongdoing. Attorney Blocker refused to comply, reminding Mr. Norris of his ethical and legal obligations.

#### **FALSE ACCUSATIONS OF CONSTITUTIONAL AND CHARTER VIOLATIONS**

Mayor Norris accused myself, former Mayor Alfin, and Councilman Klufas of violating the U.S. Constitution and Article IV, Section 7(e) of the Palm Coast City Charter by participating in the appointment of Councilman Charles A. Gambaro, Jr. on October 1, 2024. This appointment was made to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Councilwoman Cathy Heigher.

However, this appointment was both unanimous and lawful, supported by a written legal opinion from City Attorney Marcus Duffy, and conducted in accordance with the City Charter, which grants the City Council authority to fill vacancies as necessary to maintain governance continuity.

Furthermore, there is no basis for claiming that this lawful appointment violated any provision of the U.S. Constitution, particularly as the appointment process was transparent, non-discriminatory, and adhered to procedural due process.



## **FALSE SUNSHINE LAW ALLEGATIONS**

Mayor Norris next alleged that myself, Mayor Alfin, Councilman Klufas, Acting City Manager Johnston, Attorney Duffy, and City Chief of Staff Jason DeLorenzo violated the Florida Sunshine Law, codified at §286.011, Fla. Stat., by allegedly conducting a secret meeting the night prior to the appointment of Councilman Gambaro.

When pressed for evidence, Norris cited only the uncorroborated claim of a "city hall spy," whose identity he refused to disclose. Attorney Blocker again advised Mayor Norris that making criminal accusations without any proof is both reckless and potentially defamatory.

To be clear, no such meeting ever took place, and no evidence has been presented by Mayor Norris to suggest otherwise. The Sunshine Law requires that public meetings be open and noticed, and there is no evidence of any violation of this statute.

## **ONGOING DEFAMATION AND ABUSE OF POWER**

Since assuming office, Mayor Norris has continued to repeat these baseless accusations during public meetings and media interviews. For example:

- On December 3, 2024, during a public council meeting, Norris demanded that Attorney Duffy revise his legal opinion on the Gambaro appointment. Duffy refused, stating that his legal opinion had been rendered in accordance with the law to the previous council. Norris then sought consensus from the Council to force Duffy to change the opinion, which the Council unanimously rejected.
- On March 18, 2025, during another public council meeting, Mayor Norris referred to Councilman Gambaro as an "unelected imp." Councilman Gambaro is a Brigadier General in the U.S. Army Reserve and a former advisor to the President of the United States—statements of this nature degrade the office of the Mayor and disrespect public service.
- On March 20, 2025, during a video interview with *Flagler County Buzz*, Mayor Norris again accused myself, former Mayor Alfin, and former Councilman Klufas of violating the City Charter:

**MAYOR NORRIS:** *"The last council violated the city charter when they appointed Mr. Gambaro to that position. Any votes that that gentleman makes is illegitimate. Any motions he makes, anything he does, is illegitimate."*

Such statements amount to public defamation, an abuse of the Mayor's public platform, and a willful attempt to delegitimize a lawful appointment and disrupt city governance.

## **MOTIVE TO DEFLECT INVESTIGATION**

On March 11, 2025, the Palm Coast City Council voted to initiate an independent outside investigation into Mayor Norris for alleged violations of the City Charter and for numerous internal HR complaints lodged by city employees.

In what appears to be an attempt to deflect attention from this ongoing investigation, Mayor Norris has escalated his unfounded accusations and public attacks against the prior council and city staff. These actions represent a pattern of retaliation and intimidation that undermines public confidence in local government and may constitute official misconduct under §838.022, Fla. Stat. (abuse of official position).

## **CONCLUSION**

Mayor Michael Norris has demonstrated a pattern of:

- Demanding unlawful legal action without evidence;
- Making baseless accusations against former and current city officials;
- Attempting to coerce city attorneys into altering legal opinions;
- Publicly disparaging a sitting councilmember who is a decorated U.S. military officer; and
- Engaging in conduct designed to mislead the public and interfere with lawful government operations.

His actions appear to violate the Palm Coast City Charter, Florida Sunshine Law, State ethics laws, and may implicate federal constitutional protections relating to due process and freedom from government retaliation.

## **REQUEST FOR ACTION**

I respectfully request that this complaint be formally reviewed by the appropriate oversight authority, whether at the City of Palm Coast, the Florida Commission on Ethics, or other relevant state or federal agencies.

I am prepared to provide sworn testimony and additional documentation as necessary to support this complaint.

# Mayor Norris In Pattern of Offensive Behavior Toward Staff Since November, Internal Complaints Show

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Mayor Mike Norris is facing mounting challenges to the way he is exercising his authority, including authority he does not have. (© FlaglerLive)

Several city employees and directors have filed a series of complaints and memos to Human Resources documenting behavior by Palm Coast Mayor Mike Norris they considered rude, demeaning, offensive, abusive, harassing and inappropriately interfering with administrative duties, in violation of the city charter.

The complaints were filed well before three City Council members called for an independent investigation of Norris over allegedly demanding in a private meeting with Interim City Manager Lauren Johnston and Chief of Staff Jason DeLorenzo that they both resign.

The memos and complaints, all obtained by FlaglerLive, were written starting when Norris had yet to be sworn-in, when he was being oriented by staff, and continued soon after he was sworn in—in late November, in mid-December, in mid-February and late February. The incidents were reported by the city’s chief building officer, the director of human resources, the director of communications and marketing, and two members of the communications department. There may be others, but fears are rampant that Norris would retaliate.

Supporters have called for a rally in Norris’s behalf on Tuesday morning before City Council’s 9 a.m. meeting. Norris says he had no hand in organizing the rally, but agrees with his supporters that the council is retaliating against him with a call for an investigation because on March 6 he warned them that he would be calling for a building moratorium.

“They’re sowing discontent to try to run me out of office,” Norris said in a 42-minute phone interview this evening as he addressed each of the memos filed about him. He denied he said some of the more offensive words attributed to him, conceded he said most of what was alleged, but cast it all as jokes staff misunderstood and as the thin skins. He said if he’d been confronted with any of the complaints then and there he’d have apologized and explained he did not mean to offend—as he did regarding the one complaint he was told about, after he spoke harshly and rudely about the city’s Starlight Parade YouTube production.

“I have been as kind and as nice as I can to all those people up there. That’s the person I am. I never try to offend anyone,” the mayor said.

The memos and complaints draw different conclusions.

In every case, the incidents were witnessed by city employees, including one when Norris is said to have referred to the color of Marketing and Communications Director Brittany Kershaw’s painted toenails, as he was addressing her, as “fucking trash bag color,” a characterization reported by Kershaw and one other employee.

Norris, according to the memos, also sought to have Jeff Douglas, who heads Douglas Properties and is among the leading developers in town, banned from City Hall (a building built on land donated by Douglas Properties’ parent company), dismissed the city’s communications department as useless to him, insulted its production of the Christmas Starlight Parade during a meeting attended by a department employee on her first day, and told Renina Fuller during a meeting with her team that the city needed to start hiring younger, less expensive and less illness-prone employees.

Last week in a NextDoor thread that has since been taken down ([see it here](#)), Norris told Brad West, a Palm Coast resident who frequently discusses and writes about city issues, and was a former city employee, “you are making assumptions and assumptions get people killed.” He also wrote him, “Brad I walk by your house almost every day.”

The meeting with Johnston and DeLorenzo where Norris is said to have asked for their resignation was witnessed by phone by City Attorney Marcus Duffy. It was confirmed by Johnston in an open meeting, when City Council member Charles Gambaro asked her whether Norris had made the demand. Norris is also said to have told them it was a “one-way conversation.” Norris denied that he told them to resign and says he’s aware he has no such authority on any city staff. He said today the series of complaints are a pattern the city is trying to build against him to run him out. The city has forwarded the complaints or memos filed with HR to Duffy.

Norris called “laughable” the fact that the first complaint dates to his period as mayor-elect, before his swearing-in. He’d gone to City Hall to get his official portrait taken and get introduced to the marketing and communications staff. At one point Norris and Kershaw were walking through the council chamber.

According to a Fuller memo: “As Mr. Norris and Ms. Kershaw walked down the center aisle Mr. Norris said to Ms. Kershaw, ‘What color is that?’ Ms. Kershaw answered, ‘What, the carpet?’ Then Mr. Norris said, ‘No your toes’. Then Ms. Kershaw said, ‘light blue’ and Mr. Norris replied, ‘is that fucking trash bag color ... ?’ Ms. Kershaw was shocked at what she heard and replied, ‘What?’. Then Mr. Norris said, ‘You know, paint colors can have weird names.’”

In addition, Kershaw wrote in a memo of her own, “When discussing the department’s services, he dismissed them, stating he had his own marketing team and praising his campaign manager, Chase. In private, the two employees who were present later expressed concern to me that they feared for their jobs due to his comments about not needing the Communications team.”

Norris in this evening’s interview acknowledged referring to the paint color—and texted an image of China Glaze nail polish with the “Trash Can-Do Attitude” tagline—but denied using an expletive. “I don’t use those words in front of girls like that. I’m an old soldier, but I don’t use—I’ve been as kind as I can to those folks,” he said.

One of the employees who reports to Kershaw was with her and overheard the expletive, and wrote of that day: “Upon meeting Mr. Norris, his temperament was immediately unreceptive, combative, and reluctant to achieve any type of rapport with the members of our department, despite our best efforts to do so.” The employee described Norris turning to a city assistant as if to signal that he was done with the communications team. “In my opinion, based on the entirety of our time together,” the employee wrote, “this was a clear case of verbal harassment on behalf of Mr. Norris that was meant to intimidate and demean Ms. Kershaw, while also trying to gauge her reaction as a means of instilling control.” The employee referred to other instances when Norris “has audibly made profane, vulgar,

defamatory remarks overhead by myself and others within the confines of the community wing at City Hall,” and that if those interactions “are any indicator, it’s not a question of whether this will happen again, but when it will happen.”

On November 22, three days after Norris’s swearing-in, Fuller was meeting with him to introduce him to two of her employees and explain her department’s role. “During our conversation,” Fuller wrote, “Mayor Norris commented that employees’ salaries and health insurance are the city’s biggest expenses. Mayor Norris looked at me and said ‘we need to start hiring younger employees. Old employees cost us a lot of money and younger workers are in better shape and would cost the city less.’ Later in the conversation, Mayor Norris asked about random drug testing. I told him we have a system that generates the randoms. Then he said ‘I heard there is a city employee driving around in a city vehicle with ‘clean piss’ and I don’t want junkies or druggies working for the city.’”

Norris this evening said he’d requested a spreadsheet listing all employees and salaries and asked who were the “essential” employees—the employees the city would absolutely need as in a hurricane emergency, for example. “The spread sheet Ms. Fuller sent me, everyone is an essential employee,” he said. “That can’t be.” He disputed the wording Fuller attributed to him about younger, healthier employees. “I didn’t say that, but it’s kind of easy to ascertain when you look at the statistics. But I didn’t say that.” He said he was “trying to state facts.” As for the “clean piss,” he said that was true: someone had reported the case to him.

In mid-December, another member of the communications team wrote HR of how Norris had called the Starlight Parade live stream “garbage,” repeating and stressing the word in a hallway front of an employee from another department. He then interrupted a meeting with three communications and marketing employees, “yelling,” the employee reported: “‘It sucked, it was trash, it looked like horse shit.’ No one in the room responded, and the atmosphere became tense. He then asked, ‘You’re going to tell me that you think it looked good?’” When an employee suggested using a different camera, Norris is said to have replied: “‘I ain’t buying another damn camera,’ and then turned back to me, yelling, ‘I don’t wanna hear excuses. Fix it!’”

Norris said he’d given the team “plenty of compliments,” and said “I kid around those guys all the time.” When Johnston told him that he’d upset the team, he said he called them into his office and worked things out, saying he hadn’t meant to upset them. He said that’s what all other employees filing complaints should have done: confront him then and there, and he’d work it out.

In February, Fuller, the HR director, reported of an ongoing E-Team meeting as follows: “Mayor Norris came into the meeting saying ‘I am here to ruin somebody’s day.’ [Norris said he was kidding.] He went on to say he saw Mr. Douglas (a builder) come into city hall and he

wanted to know who he came to see and why.” Jeff Douglas is the CEO of Douglas Properties. “Then he stated, ‘they are not our friends and I don’t want them back in city hall’. Ms. Johnston reminded the mayor that this is a public building open to the public.”

Norris did not deny the interaction. His “ruin somebody’s day” line was “a joke, they should be able to get my humor, but if they don’t, they don’t,” he said. As for Douglas, he said he hadn’t logged in, or at least his signature was not clear, nor was the name of the person he was seeing. Norris said he wanted to know who that was, because a company associated with Douglas is suing the city under the Bert-Harris Act. “So I want where that gentleman is going when he’s coming in my city hall—our city hall,” Norris said. “And you’re not my friend if you’re trying to sue me for \$12 million.”

Douglas responded. “Our community focus remains for every day working families, fixed-income retirees and those struggling for housing and work,” he said late Monday night. “Despite this unfortunate speech, we and our partners remain undeterred in a mission to contribute time, resources and funds to partner in building a community that accepts all and works to foster a rising economy that can sustain the ongoing replacement of tired infrastructure and build a vibrant city that our children and grandchildren can be proud to call home.”

Patrick Buckley, the city’s chief building official, reported in writing an incident that took place on Feb. 24. A resident had called him, frustrated with a contractor who was refusing to install windows, claiming previous repair work had been done incorrectly. The resident went to City Hall to meet with Buckley. On the way in, Norris happened to be walking in at the same time, and was heard by another city employee walking nearby at the same time tell the resident: “Let me know if he gives you any shit,” presumably in reference to Buckley. In the event, Buckley’s interactions with the resident were courteous. (Norris said he knew the resident on a first-name basis and may have told him that if he had any trouble, to contact him. He’d help. “Isn’t that what a mayor is supposed to do—help?” Norris said.

When asked about whether the recurring complaints suggest he might have done things differently, Norris said: “Not really. I just wish if people had a problem with the things I did or I said I wish they had confronted me right then. I don’t sugarcoat anything, but I certainly wasn’t trying to be offensive to anyone.” He said on several occasions he’s sent flowers to city staffers—to Johnston when she got her master’s degree, to an executive assistant when she lost a close family members. “I have been as kind and as nice as I can to all those people up there. That’s the person I am. I never try to offend anyone.”

And he’s convinced: “They’re sowing discontent to try to run me out of office.” Remarkably, the accumulation of complaints appears to have had no effect on his approach to the job, or to suggest that perhaps he may be at fault for being too abrasive, rather than everyone else having too thin a skin, though several times during the interview he referred to himself as “an old soldier.” Palm Coast government, however, is a civilian organization.

“I’m just doing my job,” he said. “If they want to get me—whatever.”

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