

# GOVERNMENT OF THE CITY OF SOUTH FULTON

khalid kamau  
MAYOR



TAMMI SADDLER JONES  
CITY MANAGER

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Honorable Mayor khalid kamau & City Council Members

**FROM:** Tammi Saddler Jones *Tammi Saddler Jones*  
City Manager

**DATE:** May 4, 2022

**SUBJECT: Recap of Phone Conversation with Council Member Helen Willis**

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I am writing in response to the phone conversation you initiated with me on Monday, May 2, 2022. The purpose of this correspondence is to express my concerns regarding comments you made during that conversation with the hope of clarifying the scope of my responsibilities as City Manager as to personnel decisions.

During the conversation you told me that you lack confidence in the City's HR Director, Niki Graham, who reports directly to me. You further complained that Ms. Graham was acting inappropriately by investigating a complaint lodged by police department employees. Specifically, you stated that Ms. Graham was "meddling into police business" and that she needs to leave the city to go to another agency. You also stated that Chief Meadows is furious because Ms. Graham is meddling into his business. In addition, you said that over four (4) council members are uncomfortable with Ms. Graham being the HR Director and you are sick of her. Your comments were inappropriate and misplaced.

As a threshold matter, our HR policies and procedures allow for police employees to file a complaint with the HR Department. This is referenced in the City's HR policies and procedures in Number 118-18 and Number 119-18. Police officer HR complaints such as workplace discrimination and harassment and/or workplace violence and anti-bullying are not required to be filed/investigated by the City's internal affairs division as you said you desired.

In addition, I am not aware of any improper actions taken by Ms. Graham. You have not provided me with any facts showing that Ms. Graham has engaged in any wrongdoing regarding the police investigation or otherwise. It appears that your concerns about Ms. Graham are personal. If at some point, however, Ms. Graham is believed to have violated City policy, the matter will be handled pursuant to City policies and procedure and consistent with the way we handle other alleged policy violations. Regardless of who the person is, as the City Manager, I will continue to follow the City Charter and adhere to the highest ethical standards.

I would like to clarify my decision to bring in an external law enforcement entity to investigate the two specific complaints that the HR Department attempted to handle. I reached out to staff at the City of Acworth and City of Douglasville (to name a few) and both confirmed that they have used external law enforcement agencies to investigate complaints within their respective police departments. Your comments to discourage me from continuing to use an external law enforcement agency to conduct an unbiased investigation into the complaints within our police department is, therefore, unfounded, not in the City's best interest, and inappropriate.

Most importantly, while I respect your opinion as a City Council Member, I must remind you that regardless of whether Ms. Graham is meeting your expectations, personnel decisions are solely my responsibility. The City Council is not authorized to make personnel decisions regarding City employees (with the exception of the Municipal Judge, City Attorney and City Manager). In this regard, you also stated that while you and the other council members cannot say anything directly to Ms. Graham, you can say something to me, as City Manager, and that I'm going to have to do something. You continued to stress to me that Ms. Graham is going to have got to go. Your statement implies an ultimatum concerning my employment if I don't do what you all are suggesting. It is improper to attempt to influence, persuade, threaten, or pressure me into making personnel decisions at your behest or the behest of other council members.

Finally, you are well aware that the Chief of Police reports directly to me. By engaging in a discussion with the Chief of Police about my decision to launch an external investigation you are undermining my authority. This is a personnel matter and, as stated above, any effort to influence my lawful handling of a personnel matter is improper. Therefore, I am asking you to please refrain from interfering in my ability to perform my duties and responsibilities as City Manager.

In closing, I appreciate that I serve at the will of the City Council.