



Boone County Commission

October 22, 2020

John Glascock, City Manager
City of Columbia
701 East Broadway
Columbia, MO 65201

Dear John:

On Tuesday, October 20, 2020, we heard the news that the Holiday Inn Executive Center would transfer from Executive Hotel management to Driftwood Hospitality Management, the same group that runs “Margaritaville” at the Lake of the Ozarks. We saw that the media interviewed Ed Baker, an owner with a small percentage interest in the hotel, and that he had continued to lay the economic troubles of the hotel at the feet of the Health Department. Since we both spent most of both Tuesday and Wednesday working on County business, neither of us was aware that the Southern District Commissioner, Fred Parry, had posted a lengthy and largely inaccurate diatribe on Facebook about the hotel’s closure.

We write today to express our ongoing support for the Health Department, and specifically the Health Department Director, Stephanie Browning, and to affirm our commitment to collegial and collaborative relations with the City of Columbia. We regret the actions of Mr. Parry and write to specifically disavow them.

Some context may explain how we got to this point. As you undoubtedly remember, shortly after Director Browning issued the first Health Order, a group of individuals met at the Executive Center on a weekend day, purportedly to discuss the impact on local businesses from the Order, but ultimately leading to a decision to sue Director Browning. Emails came to light early that next week demonstrating that Mr. Parry and his supporter Mr.

Baker had organized the meeting. More emails demonstrated that, following the meeting, Mr. Parry had provided information about those in attendance to Matt Woods, of the Eng & Woods firm, who was planning to file a lawsuit against Director Browning on behalf of one of those in attendance at the meeting. The emails from and to Mr. Parry were not sent using his county email account but used one of his several private email accounts.

After the lawsuit was filed and when Mr. Parry was confronted with his involvement in the lawsuit, he denied involvement and asserted he knew nothing about it. Since then, Mr. Parry and others associated with him have touted their commitment to “transparency.” We suggest that, if Mr. Parry is truly committed to transparency, he release all of his emails—from all of the accounts he maintains—and that he allow the attorneys at Eng & Woods to disclose his involvement in the lawsuit, including the disclosure of all documents related to that lawsuit. That disclosure, we are confident, will prove Mr. Parry’s complicity in the actions leading up to the filing of the lawsuit.

Why does that matter? It matters not only because Mr. Parry chose to obfuscate the truth but because, as you are well aware, choosing to become involved in filing a lawsuit against Director Browning created an irreconcilable conflict for Mr. Parry. Director Browning is the Director of the City/**County** Health Department. Mr. Parry helped to file a lawsuit against the very entity he was elected to represent. If he wished to take that action, he first should have resigned as a County Commissioner. Instead, he chose to deny his actions and both the City and the County spent considerable resources, through their legal counsel, in fashioning a defense against the legal action that was filed. This, especially in the time of a pandemic, when resources are limited and the need for all hands on deck was at an all-time high, was not only unprofessional, it was unconscionable.

So, now we come to Mr. Parry’s Facebook diatribe of Tuesday. Yet again, in a very public forum, he came to the aid of his supporter, Mr. Baker, and attacked both the City and Director Browning. And, in the process, he misstated or ignored the relevant facts, and

ignored that, in recent campaign writings and appearances, he has expressed his approval of the Health Department (giving it an “A+” rating), and touted his personal success in creating a collaborative relationship with you and the City of Columbia.

As we stated earlier in this letter, we support you, the City, the Health Department, and Director Browning. From the outset of this public health pandemic, Director Browning has done extraordinary work, walking the tightrope of keeping our population as safe and well as possible, given the virulence of this virus, and keeping our economy up and running. And let’s be clear—she has been creating a BALANCE. She has not taken the approach of other health directors and leaders across the world who have entirely shut down activity in order to stop the spread of the virus. Instead, she has used the available data and the developing best practices to modify her orders when the data allow. Instead of attacking Director Browning and her staff, we should thank them for caring so much for our community that they square their shoulders and raise their chins when they are vilified in the town square.

Similarly, we should thank you, and the rest of the leadership of the City of Columbia for working with us on the complex and ever-shifting needs presented in this world of COVID-19. We are fortunate that we have colleagues such as you, and we value you as we all work for the survival and regeneration of Boone County.

Very truly yours,



Daniel K. Atwill
Presiding Commissioner



Janet M. Thompson
District II (North) Commissioner