

Public statement of the Oakland Town Council 10-3-23

The Town of Oakland Council has received a written resignation letter from our Town Manager, Ella Bowman. Ms. Bowman has also accepted a job in another community, and we wish her well. The Council has yet to meet to address her departure, including compliance with and adherence to the terms of her employment agreement with the Town. The Council will schedule a meeting at an appropriate time.

That being said, the content of Ms. Bowman's resignation letter, and the manner in which Ms. Bowman chose to inform the Council – by late night email copied to the media - was both unprofessional and inappropriate. Her letter includes false allegations of improper motives for a recent employment investigation to a Councilor and six Town employees. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Town Council expressly denies that any action took with regard to Ms. Bowman at any time during her employment had anything to do with anti-transgender bias, or with Ms. Bowman's journey. Any suggestion to the contrary, by her or anyone else, is false. The truth is that the Council has been uniformly supportive of Ms. Bowman, as evidenced by our recent decision to extend her employment agreement.

As has been reported, Ms. Bowman was placed on paid, non-disciplinary leave because of complaints made against her in her role as Town Manager. Under the Town's anti-harassment policies, and under the law, allegations of the kind asserted against Ms. Bowman must be investigated. Ms. Bowman knows this, because in her role as Town Manager, she was charged with both enforcing those policies, and complying with them as a Town employee. During the investigation, the Town strived to keep the matter confidential, both to protect Ms. Bowman, and to prevent possible retaliation against the employees who complained about Ms. Bowman. The Council will continue to respect that confidentiality while we await the final report from the Investigator. That report will be a confidential record once it is received by the Town, and shared with Ms. Bowman. However, in light of Ms. Bowman's comments in her resignation letter, we as a Council invite Ms. Bowman to waive her confidentiality with regard to the final report, regardless of the report's findings. Given the false allegations about the Council's motives made publicly by Ms. Bowman and others, we believe that full disclosure of the investigator's report by Ms. Bowman is necessary to ensure the confidence of the public in the Council's actions.

The Council requests that this statement be published in full.