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VIA EMAIL atoneydeal@myseminole.com

Ann Toney-Deal  
Seminole City Hall  
9199 113<sup>th</sup> Street N  
Seminole, FL 33772

Dear City Manager Toney-Deal:

I would like to first thank the city leadership staff for their wonderful support of the Seminole CERT program. I have been a very strong supporter of CERT for many years and previously involved in many other CERT programs throughout the Tampa Bay area.

I spoke many times with the City of Seminole Fire Chief Burford upon her arrival to the City of Seminole about the formation of a local CERT program. Her previous and vast experience with CERT programs was music to my ears.

It was a great opportunity to give back to the city in which I was born and raised. Currently, I reside in Unincorporated Largo but still fortunate to live in the City of Seminole Fire District.

The City of Seminole CERT program has been highly successful and I am proud to say that I played a very significant role in its success. It is a program that has done wonderful things for all of the citizens including those in the Fire District.

Due to a very unfortunate incident, I am officially filing a complaint against the City of Seminole and the Mayor for her inappropriate and threatening actions that began at approximately 7 p.m. on Tuesday, October 16, 2018.

The said incident occurred at a CERT general meeting at Fire Station 29 in the training room when I was approached by Mayor Waters just prior to the start of the meeting. She was very angry and demanded to know why I attended the city council meeting and subsequent workshop on October 9, 2018. She explained to me that I have no business "meddling" in things within the city. She stated that if I have any concerns, I needed to contact the city manager or herself. It was explained to her that I had no issues with city events. Again, she stated I was at the meeting for 4 hours and demanded to know why I was there. For the record, I was not there for 4 hours and during the time I was there, I sat with my brother who was in attendance. He is a former City of Seminole firemedic.

On October 9, 2018 at approximately 2:39 p.m., I filed a public records request for items that would be discussed at the workshop later in the day. The mayor also informed me that I have no business placing public records request with the city while once again informing me that I do not even live in the city. Once again she stated, "it was none of my business."

As you may or may not know, I do operate IONTB LLC, a local news entity, that is focused on news stories of interest in the local area. It is rather popular and reaches close to 500,000 people each month. It was clear her threats were not directly to me as a CERT member. The Mayor's attack cannot be viewed as anything other than an attack on a member of the media. IONTB has stayed completely out of politics since its inception over 5 years ago. There was never any intention of IONTB writing or publishing any items discussed at the meeting. She follows my site and frequently retweets posted items of interest regarding the city. She is very aware of IONTB and it has been the topic of discussion many times in the past.

The mayor did not end the assault with the initial interaction. During a break, despite trying to distance myself from her, she berated me letting me know that I do not pay taxes in the city and it is none of my business. I attempted to inform her that I do pay taxes into the Seminole Fire District and reminded her that it was public meeting and she is out of line. Once again, she told me to mind my own business and to "back off."

At the conclusion of the meeting, while I was still sitting in front of her, she placed her hand on shoulder and whispered into my ear to heed her advice in a threatening manner. Multiple times, I informed her that I would prefer to have this discussion at a much more appropriate time and place. This all was done inappropriately in a public forum witnessed by many people within the Seminole CERT program. Her actions were clearly intended to make me feel demeaned and intimidated.

At the conclusion of the meeting, I did inform Chief Burford that my activity with the Seminole CERT program is currently on hold solely based upon the mayor's actions. By the mayor's reasoning, what business do I have being in Seminole CERT if I don't pay taxes into the city.

This intimidation will not and should never be tolerated by any citizen, especially a member of the media. These actions by the mayor are being taken very seriously and all options are currently on the table. As an initial step, this letter shall serve notice to yourself and all city council members of this occurrence.

The city and the mayor must understand that I am a journalist within the meaning of section 90.5015(1)(a) of the Florida Statutes (2017), in that I am regularly engaged in the collecting, photographing, recording, writing, editing, reporting, and publishing news -- i.e., information of public concern relating to local issues and events -- for my news entity. I know you are familiar with these principles. This mayor's inappropriate actions on behalf of the city must not be tolerated.

I will pursue every avenue available to honestly and accurately report on the mayor's actions and hold the city accountable for her actions.

I'm moved to ask what prompted the above-referenced events and if you'll discuss the matter with me.

I am hereby requesting a full investigation of her actions and demand a response in a timely manner.

CC: Jim Quinn  
Thomas Barnhorn  
Chris Burke  
Roger Edelman  
Bob Matthews  
Trish Springer

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hirschfield', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Steven L. Hirschfield