

Date: March 13, 2024

To: Crystal Lake Township Board

From: Sondra Halliday, Crystal Lake Township Deputy Clerk and Resident

Subj: Conduct Not Addressed by CLT Board

As a voting resident of Crystal Lake Township, as well as a Township appointee, I am asking that the Crystal Lake Township Board take action to address the threatening, harassing, and disrespectful text communication from Township Treasurer Brooke Popp to me. On March 5, 2024, I received an unprovoked text message from Treasurer Popp, threatening my job as well as another township staff member's. This text is the latest in a series of unprofessional behaviors from Treasurer Popp. I am requesting that the Board take action to address behavior that is disruptive to the function of the Township and disrespectful to its staff and residents. I have expectations that both Crystal Lake Township Board and staff remain professional and dedicated to Township business, working together congenially.

The text messages received on March 5, 2024, from Treasurer Popp implies that my remote work poses a burden to the functioning of the township and threatened my job and that of another Township staff member. In her message, the Treasurer asserts that working for the township is a "12 month a year job." Please note that I do work twelve months a year, some of which is from a remote location. Note that the Treasurer also works remotely and has mentioned on many occasions that there is no statutory requirement, aside from tax collection, for her to post official office hours. Everyone working for Crystal Lake Township currently does work remotely in some capacity.

In the Treasurer's second text she states, "it's unfortunate that we can't work with your schedule." First, there is no "we" in my relationship with the Treasurer or any other officer other than the Clerk. My position as Deputy Clerk is completely independent of any authority the Treasurer has within the Township government. Per MCL 41.69, "The township clerk shall appoint a deputy, who shall serve at the pleasure of the clerk." Upon my initial appointment to Deputy Clerk by former Clerk Sue Sullivan and later Clerk Judy VanMeter, I was completely upfront with my schedule. In the nearly four years that I have worked as Deputy Clerk, this has never been an issue with either Clerk.

While the latest inappropriate communication made by the Treasurer has provoked me to bring this communication to the Board's attention, there have been many other past instances of less than professional behavior by Treasurer Popp. The Board has been aware of these instances yet has chosen not to address them which I feel has led the Treasurer to believe she can assert herself into any function within the Township. As a voter in this township, I expect more from this Board. Below is a list of just a few instances where the Treasurer has been an obstruction to other officers or employees in the efficient conduct of their responsibilities.

- In February 2023, the Treasurer, without Board approval or notification to staff, canceled the Township credit card while township transactions were in process. It took several weeks for the Treasurer to replace the canceled credit card and resulted in the delay of several Township initiatives. Cancellation of this card caused many hours of additional work by officers and employees, yet it was never addressed by the Board.

- When Township IT Staffer Brian Halliday was purchasing the board-approved laptops for Township Officers and Zoning, the Treasurer provided him with the canceled credit card number, knowing that the transaction would be rejected by the supplier. This was not only humiliating for Brian and the Township, it wasted three hours of time for the HP sales representative. Since there was no replacement credit card, the Township was forced to pay by purchase order. There was no discussion by the Board.
- In the fall of 2023, without any statutory or moral authority, Treasurer Popp published a Request for Proposal for legal representation on the Michigan Townships Association web forum. The Township's long-time law firm took notice and immediately resigned, leaving the Township without legal representation, creating a hardship for other officers and staff, particularly the Zoning Administrator. Once again, there was no comment from the Board.
- In late summer/early fall of 2023, Treasurer Popp shared a personnel document with the Board and public that she claims to have found while going through the Supervisor's personal work files. She displayed this document to visitors and in front of the recording camera, Owl. This document contained personally identifiable information and should not have been handled recklessly in a public manner. This, again, was not addressed by the Board.
- In March of 2024, the Treasurer shared a graphic with the attorney claiming the Supervisor had posted it on the Township webpage. This was misleading and untruthful as the graphic shared by the Treasurer was not what was posted on the Township's website. The graphic posted was merely communication to the public regarding the need for residents to participate in local government. Treasurer Popp once again cost Township taxpayers by requesting legal counsel for an issue that she has no statutory responsibility for. Will this issue be addressed by the board?

For nearly four years, I have witnessed what appears to be an obsession by Treasurer Popp to discredit and humiliate co-workers without any regard for the impact on Township operations. This five-member Board is elected by the residents of this township who expect and deserve professional and efficient conduct from paid public officials. Treasurer Popp has made a consistent and continual effort to disrupt Township operations with petty and childish behavior, yet the Board has been silent. Inappropriate, provoking, and harassing actions by any elected official of Crystal Lake Township should never go unaddressed. Will you address the issue I brought forward in this communication?

Thank you,

Sondra Halliday
Deputy Clerk, Crystal Lake Township
Crystal Lake Township Resident