

## Fw: Town of Middlebury - report of inappropriate behavior

From Amy Jennings <amy.jennings@mcinnisinc.com>

To Robert Smith<rws@robertsmithlaw.com>

Date Monday, May 12th, 2025 at 12:51 PM



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**From:** Patricia Kurze <pkurze@middlebury-ct.org>

**Sent:** Thursday, April 3, 2025 11:22 AM

**To:** Christian McInnis <chris@mcinnisinc.com>

**Cc:** Amy Jennings <amy.jennings@mcinnisinc.com>

**Subject:** Town of Middlebury - report of inappropriate behavior

Good afternoon Chris,

The purpose of this correspondence is to make you aware of an inappropriate behavior incident that recently occurred within our Town Hall Building. I would like to be very clear that the employee who was subjected to the inappropriate behavior is not the party responsible for this report (as they have considerable concerns for being subjected to retaliatory consequences). I am bringing this sensitive information to your attention as a first-hand witness to the incident and in my capacity as HR Liaison.

On Thursday, March 27<sup>th</sup> the First Selectman, Edward St. John, came into the Town Hall Finance Office and was standing at the counter of the Finance Assistant's desk (Connie Brunswick). My office is immediately adjacent to Ms. Brunswick's office and there is an open doorway which connects our two offices. The First Selectman and Ms. Brunswick began engaging in conversation pertinent to work matters. At one point, I overheard the subject matter they were discussing and proceeded to walk from my office into Ms. Brunswick's office to join the conversation and offer input, as it involved matters pertinent to my HR functions. I entered Ms. Brunswick's office and positioned myself at the counter of Ms. Brunswick's desk, standing next to the First Selectman. As a result of my presence, the First Selectman became noticeably agitated and the audible level of his voice began to escalate and the tone of his voice immediately degraded. At that same moment, I heard Ms. Brunswick politely make a justifiable inquiry to the First Selectman for a written statement she needed from him to document a payroll adjustment he had verbally requested her to make. Ms. Brunswick was unable to finish her sentence as she was abruptly cut-off by the First Selectman

who significantly raised the audible level of his voice even further, pointed his finger at Ms. Brunswick over her desk counter and in a demeaning tone said to Ms. Brunswick "you'll do what I tell you to do". Ms. Brunswick proceeded to immediately acquiesce the First Selectman's demand. I personally then made a professionally appropriate inquiry to the First Selectman regarding the subject matter being discussed and was given a very curt response in a dismissive tone. The First Selectman then exited the Finance Clerk's office moments thereafter. There were no other first-hand witnesses located within the Finance Assistant's office during this exchange. I made Ms. Brunswick's supervisor (CFO Seth Bernstein) aware of the incident upon his return to the office the following day. During our conversation, Mr. Bernstein noted to me that Ms. Brunswick had verbally stated to him that the First Selectman had spoken to her in an inappropriate tone of voice the day before.

As you are well aware, a Town Hall employee was recently placed on Administrative Leave for violating workplace conduct policy by using an inappropriate tone with another employee and displaying behavior that was classified as unprofessional and threatening in nature. That behavior was deemed to be deserving of disciplinary action. Notably, the First Selectman is not classified as an employee as he serves in the capacity of an Elected Official - and is therefore not bound by the Town of Middlebury's workplace employee codes of conduct. May I defer to you for advisement on how the Town should handle inappropriate behaviors when they are demonstrated by Elected Officials against employees. May I further defer to you for advisement regarding what measures can be taken from an HR perspective to ensure the conduct of Town Elected Officials is held to a fair and equitable standard. The Town currently does not have a policy in place which specifically governs the codes of conduct for Elected Officials. Furthermore, if the conduct of Elected Officials as it relates to their interactions with employees is advised to not fall within the parameters of Human Resource administration, please advise how those matters are to be appropriately handled to support a safe, respectful professional working environment for all employees.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this matter.

Patricia Kurze

Finance/HR Liaison

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