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February 7, 2016

Mayor Jan Hill
Assembly Members Diana Lapham, George Campbell, Mike Case, Ron Jackson,
Tresham Gregg, Margaret Friedenbauer,

RE: Agenda Item 12C, Public Comments re Employees

Dear Mayor Hill and Members of the Haines Borough Assembly,

I have always favored a method for evaluating the Assembly's employees (Manager, Clerk, Finance Director, Attorney) that allows for ratings from colleagues and from the community as well as from the Assembly (commonly referred to as "360 Evaluations"). But I would like to suggest that comments received outside of an annual performance review should not be given any especial weight. To do so signals to the public that it is proper to pepper the Assembly with comments appreciating or criticizing your employees at any time. It is at best distracting; at worst it subjects your employees to constant conversation about their performance at public meetings – which can be demoralizing depending on the content.

I am also deeply concerned that derogatory statements about anybody – employee, Assembly member, member of the public – are entertained by you. There are two sections of Borough code that govern the conduct of Assembly meetings: HBC 2.10.060 and HBC 2.10.010 (see below). I made the parts that stick out as particularly relevant bold.

I confess that I believe that decorum is not maintained when anybody – member of the audience or staff or Assembly member - speaks derogatorily about another person. Speaking like that doesn't seem to measure up to the definition of decorum: behavior in keeping with good taste and propriety. And besides, listening to that kind of speech feels awful. I think I speak for so many members of the community when I say that we want to come to Assembly meetings and feel safe, respected, listened to; and we want to listen. When we have to listen to someone being put down, it just feels terrible. If nothing else, it is embarrassing. I would appreciate it very much if you could work to curtail that kind of hurtful speech inside the Assembly Chambers. I don't think it is a violation of free speech; rather it is upholding the very rules the Assembly has agreed to live by. And here are those rules:

2.10.060 Assembly rules – Speaking, rules of conduct.

B. Every member while speaking shall speak only to the subject under debate, **shall refrain from personalities**, and shall not refer to any other member of the assembly except in a respectful manner.

2.10.010 Procedures of the assembly.

A. The mayor shall preside at all meetings of the assembly. **The mayor shall preserve order and decorum among the assembly members** and is responsible for the conduct of all meetings in compliance with the rules of the assembly. **The mayor may at any time make such rules as the mayor deems proper to preserve order among the spectators in the assembly chambers during sessions of the assembly.**

Even though HB 2.10.010 seems to lay the responsibility for the conduct of meetings at the feet of the Mayor, the Mayor need not bear the sole responsibility. I think every member of the Assembly bears the responsibility for what goes on in the Chambers; and by indicating a “Point of Order,” can help the Mayor handle whatever situation arises.

2.10.080 Point of order.

Any member may make a point of order without a second at any time. The presiding officer may speak to points of order in preference to other members, and shall decide all such questions, subject to appeal to the assembly by motion duly seconded; and no other business shall be in order until the question on the appeal has been decided.

Assembly meetings are, after all, meetings of the leadership *team*.

Good luck and thanks!

Stephanie Scott

Cc: Brad Ryan, Haines Borough Manager; Julie Cozzi, Haines Borough Clerk