

CHIEF APPRAISER HENDERSON COVERS OVER LATHEM ACTIONS IN PERFORMANCE REPORT

Once again Michael A. Henderson, Hall County Chief Appraiser, has shown his lack of professionalism, character and management skills in managing the Hall County Tax Assessors office!

The Times reported on 09-25-2009 that an employee in the Hall County Tax Assessors Office, Pam Dixon, had filed a formal complaint of sexual harassment and discrimination against her supervisor, Richard Lathem, with Hall County and the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Hall County then hired a local attorney to investigate the matter for a fee of \$4,600.00. He filed his report on November 12,2009 with Hall County. A copy of this report was obtained and reviewed by HCCFEG through Open Records law with the following observations:

Page 2- Pam Dixon stated Richard Lathem ran his fingers down her back in September,2007 with no witnesses present. She further stated to him she did not want him to touch her. Lathem stated he did not recall whether or not the incident happened.

Page 2- Dixon stated he then touched her again in February and August,2008 with no witnesses present. Lathem denied that he touched her on these two occasions.

Page 2- Dixon stated Lathem placed his hands on her shoulders in January,2009 and attempted to massage her shoulders asking her if it felt good. Lathem then admitted he placed his hands on her shoulders asking her if she wanted him to give her a massage but she pulled away. He agreed that he then apologized for touching her.

Page 3- Dixon, Lathem and Kevin Pirkle was leaving work on a Saturday in March,2009. Dixon asked them to wait for her in that she had to step in the restroom for a minute. Lathem stated he pushed the door open 5-6 inches and told Dixon he and Mr. Pirkle were ready to go. Dixon states that he pushed the automatic button and the door fully opened and made her uncomfortable in that there were wall mirrors in the restroom. Pirkle agreed with Pam Dixon statement that the door was fully opened rather than 5-6 inches. The report goes on to say(page 8) that inappropriate behavior includes not only unwelcome touching, however innocuous, but also opening a bathroom door reserved only for the opposite sex, even when the motive was not for sexual gratification.

Page 3- Dixon states on March 24,2009 Lathem ran his finger down her back and when she moved away he said " Oops I did it again ,Didn't I ". Lathem acknowledges the incident and claims that he ran his finger only 4 or 5 inches. He admitted this was adolescent and inappropriate behavior and that he should not have touched her after that she had asked not to do so.

This report further states a male supervisor who runs his finger down the spine of a female employee he supervises, especially when asked not to do it, and places his hands on her shoulders with the attempt to massage them, may be considered as engaging in rude , insensitive behavior that should not have occurred under any circumstances.

We now come to the heart of the matter with a review of the Performance Report Mr. Henderson conducted on Richard Lathem for the time period of 12-23-2008 through 12-23-2009. With all the incidents described above that occurred in this time period, Mr. Henderson states :

Lathem did not have areas that needed improvement . This is unbelievable ! (Page 3, Performance Report)

Lathem had outstanding performance in area of tact and consideration with other employees. How is this possible ? (Page 2, Performance Report)

Lathem had outstanding performance in solving employee problems! This one is hard to swallow!

Lathem was not recommended for any development activities! We are speechless on this one!

This performance report illustrates Chief Appraiser Henderson is still operating under the “good old boy system” with no oversight he was so well trained under when Emory L. Martin, Jr. ruled this office! There is no way an individual would know any of the within disturbing incidents ever happened by reading this report.. How could this bias performance report get by the tax assessor board under the watchful eye of Chairman Bobby Hulsey? Once again we must ask what was this board doing when this report was forwarded to Human Resources? You would think the tax assessors would at least monitor the performance report on Richard Lathem after the scathing write up by Attorney Sam Harben Jr.,.If the tax board reviewed this performance report that was completed by Mr. Henderson , then we have more problems than Mr. Henderson!

HCCFEG invites the citizens of Hall County to read the eight page report filed with Hall County by Attorney Sam Harben, Jr on this matter and make your own decision about what is going on in the Hall County Tax Assessors Office. You may find this material on our website at www.hccfeg.org .We have also posted the Richard Lathem Performance Report discussed herein as well as the investigative report HCCFEG conducted on Michael A. Henderson, Chief Appraiser for taxpayer review.