

Wollaston Mayor disputes workplace harassment investigation findings



By Bill Kilpatrick

After the closed session of Wollaston council on May 14, the interim CAO/clerk, Steven Potter, released the following public-media statement on both the Township's Facebook page and on the township's official web page. The statement refers to recent findings regarding a workplace investigation that involved eight harassment allegations that were made against Wollaston Mayor Michael Fuerth. The statement reads: "Council was recently advised of the results of a workplace investigation undertaken in relation to allegations of harassment made by a township employee against Mayor Fuerth. Upon receipt of the allegations, the township took immediate steps to undertake an investigation pursuant to the township's Workplace Harassment and Violence and Prevention Policy under the Occupational Health and Safety Act... The investigation was conducted by an independent third-party investigator. The investigator concluded that Mayor Fuerth engaged in two instances of personal harassment and one instance of workplace harassment in relation to the township employee. No findings of harassment were made in relation to the other allegations. There was no allegation or finding of sexual harassment...The township's Interim CAO-clerk has advised council of the remedial measures and corrective actions being undertaken to ensure a safe workplace for township employees. Council wishes to assure the public and all township staff that this action plan will be implemented... Council recognizes the importance of promoting and ensuring a supportive and positive work environment for all members of township staff. Council is looking forward to moving ahead with staff to deliver township programs and services in a positive, productive, and transparent manner of benefit to all residents and business owners within the township." Bancroft This Week reached out to Mayor Fuerth for comment and was directed to his legal representative Patrick James B.A., LLB, of James Lawyers, who released the following statement alleging that the investigation and findings were "bogus" and "politically motivated," but also stated that there were further allegations regarding conflicts of interest against the mayor. The statement read: "Wollaston council/township's bogus harassment investigation referred to in the press release - including three other conflict of interest complaints-constitute two politically-motivated bullying and persecution investigations for the purpose of publicly embarrassing, shaming and tarnishing Mayor Fuerth's personal and professional reputation. Mayor Fuerth is currently reviewing his legal options with respect to taking legal action against Wollaston council and Wollaston Township at this time." Mayor Fuerth eventually spoke to Bancroft This Week and stated, "I've been dedicated to this municipality for over 14 years and I'm going to defend my reputation." Bancroft This Week reached out to the Wollaston interim CAO-clerk for comment regarding the statement and for information regarding the three conflict of interest complaints. Due to the Victoria Day holiday Potter was unable to provide any further information by press time. It is not clear at this time what the nature of the investigations are or who was involved. This is a developing story and more information will be provided as it becomes available.