

Probe finds Thompson crossed boundary of decorum

Incident with county employee occurred in June

By Jack Heffernan
EO Media Group

Clatsop County Commissioner Lianne Thompson “crossed the boundary of acceptable decorum” when she allegedly placed her hands on a county employee and spoke in a loud and frustrated tone about County Manager Cameron Moore after a Red Cross meeting at Fort Clatsop in June, an internal investigation has found.

The county employee, who has not been publicly identified, did not feel threatened or intimidated but thought Thompson’s behavior was “bizarre.”

County commissioners will discuss the findings of the internal investigation at an executive session later this month. If the commissioners choose to take any disciplinary action against Thompson, the board would make an announcement during a public meeting.

The incident exposes tension between Commissioner Thompson, some of her fellow commissioners, and County Manager Moore that has bubbled under the surface for several months.



Lianne Thompson

Scott Lee

Commissioner Scott Lee, the board’s chairman, learned of the incident soon after it happened, though he did not disclose how. Lee then called an executive session in late July with other board members and Portland-based labor attorney Heather Martin. At the private session, the board decided to pursue an investigation and hire Jill Goldsmith of Workplace Solutions Northwest, a Portland mediation service, to conduct the probe.

Goldsmith interviewed the county employee who had allegedly been touched by Thompson, a witness to the incident, and a county employee who has a personal relationship with Thompson and is familiar with the commissioner’s demeanor and concerns about the county manager. Thompson declined to be interviewed but submitted her account through an attorney.

The results of the internal investigation were revealed to commissioners during an executive session Wednesday night.

“Several staff have raised issues about county government with me,” Thompson said in an email to The Daily Astorian. “They said they feared retaliation if they went public. I now understand their fears of retaliation.”

But Lee insists the internal investigation was a human-resources matter meant to ensure that county staff are protected from commissioners, who supervise the county manager and staff.

“It’s outrageous that she would accuse me of making this issue politically motivated,” Lee said. “I have been following the advice of county counsel.”

Official role

The internal investigation found that Thompson was acting in her role as commissioner during the June 27 incident after a Red Cross meeting at Fort Clatsop in Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

After the Red Cross meeting, Thompson approached the county employee and expressed frustration with Moore. She also allegedly said that she “was the only commissioner on the board who worked.”

Thompson, according to the report, at one point became agitated about Moore, stepped toward the county employee

and asked, “Do you know what he did?” As the county employee reflexively placed her hands up, Thompson allegedly placed her hands on the employee’s hands or, according to the witness, upper arms near the shoulders. The county employee then took two to three steps back as Thompson vociferously repeated her question.

After untangling herself, the county employee asked Thompson what she was talking about. Thompson then allegedly expressed her belief that Moore had intentionally scheduled a meeting in May so that she would not be able to attend. The county employee described Thompson as upset and agitated during the conversation.

In the account Thompson provided through an attorney, the commissioner said she has no memory of physically pushing anyone backward. “She is the first to admit she is sometimes loud — a character trait she attributes to her passion for the people of Clatsop County, to her blue-collar roots, and to her hearing loss. She is outwardly demonstrative. She sometimes talks with her hands or touches people during conversations (for example, she may place a supportive hand on someone’s shoulder or she might touch someone’s arm while making a point).”

‘Appropriate decorum’

According to board rules, commissioners must commit themselves to “ethical, businesslike, and lawful conduct, including proper use of authority and appropriate decorum when acting as board members.” The internal investigation concluded Thompson violated this policy.

Lee pointed to an incident in 2014 when he castigated former County Commissioner Dirk Rohne, now a Port of Astoria commissioner. Rohne allegedly complained about staff and former County Manager Scott Somers to Portland-based labor attorney Akin Blitz.

“This is not the first time I’ve called out a commission-

er for failing to understand how to do his or her job, in my opinion, and getting out of their lane with staff,” Lee said. “It’s a very big problem and it’s been something that I take seriously.”

David Kramer, Thompson’s Salem-based attorney, questioned whether the board has the authority to investigate an independently elected official since that power is not specifically outlined in the county charter. He said the board’s rules apply to conduct at board meetings, “but nothing you allege arguably relates to a board ‘meeting.’”

Kramer called the internal investigation “likely politically motivated, and it undercuts the political independence of elected public officials.”

Drumheller was lodging industry leader

Drumheller from Page 1A
Escape Lodging

After graduation from the Carson College of Business at Washington State University, Drumheller participated in the Hyatt Hotel management training program before establishing Escape Lodging of Cannon Beach as its chief executive officer in 2001.

Escape Lodging also owns the Ocean Lodge, The Inn at Cannon Beach and other lodging properties and restaurants in Oregon and Washington state. Drumheller served on the Oregon Restaurant and Lodging Association Board of Directors, Washington State University Hotel and Restaurant Advisory Board of Directors and Travel Portland Board of Directors.

In 2014, Drumheller and Tom Krueger teamed to open Tom’s Fish & Chips restaurant at 240 N. Hemlock St.

Drumheller said in a 2014 interview his goal was to “try to make it really, really cozy, especially during the offseason for the locals.”



ERICK BENDEL PHOTO

Tom Krueger and Tom Drumheller, the two “Toms” of Tom’s Fish & Chips.

Drumheller and Krueger opened a second location in Seaside this summer.

“I was very fortunate to have some great mentors I admired and learned a great deal from,” Drumheller said in an alumni magazine profile. “When one of them passed away, it spurred me, along with my future business partner, to take what I had learned and start my own company. It was both very scary and exciting. The risk-to-reward ratio has been better than I could have imagined.”

This spring he was induct-

ed into the inaugural class of the Carson College of Business Hall of Fame.

The city mourns

Friends and family gathered in his last days to salute the man they had grown to know and love.

Robin Risley was among the founding members of the arts commission when Drumheller served as chairman.

“He was such a fun person to have at the meeting,” Risley said. “He did things with a sense of humor. We didn’t all

come from the same place, but he was so inclusive that most of the decisions were made were fair and forward thinking. I just appreciated him so much. He always had such a twinkle in his eye.”

Cannon Beach Police Chief Jason Schermerhorn knew Drumheller as a member of the Tourism Advisory Committee.

“When I started with the city five years ago, the city manager at the time said, ‘There’s a list of people you need to meet,’ and he was at the top of the list,” Schermerhorn said. “He always had a smile on his face, and very generous when he gave back to the community.”

“He was a huge rock here in Cannon Beach,” said Court Carrier, the executive director of the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce. “He was important — a hospitality executive for decades.”

Drumheller and his wife, Christy Lynn, have two adult daughters, Brook Burnett and Britney Drumheller.

A memorial service will be scheduled.

Online hotel market ‘an evolving area’

Taxes from Page 1A

forthcoming, Sawrey said. Often rooms are sold at a discount to these intermediaries, who take their own profit off the sale. Without knowing which rooms are being sold to what booking site, figuring out which booking site to hold accountable for reporting that taxable profit margin is difficult.

“It takes more time for us. Are people not reporting? Do they misunderstand? We don’t know the situation if we don’t have numbers in front of us,” Sawrey said.

Sawrey and City Attorney Tammy Herdener hope to change the ordinance so that companies who don’t file their tax returns will face a fine.

In May, AirBnB presented a voluntary agreement to the city of Seaside to collect thousands of dollars of lodging taxes on Seaside vacation rentals.

Some saw the agreement as an opportunity reap the benefits of previously untapped revenue. Some in the lodging community, however, think the agreement gives the company an unfair advantage over other hotel owners, and ultimately drain affordable long-term housing units to the vacation rental market.

“This is an evolving area. Cities all over Oregon are having trouble with this,” Herdener said. “But to whoever is listening, it is important to have

this in our code so (intermediaries) know they are responsible.”

Next steps

It’s hard to estimate how much more revenue these changes could bring in for the city, because there is so much variation between lodging options. For City Councilor George Vetter, the solution comes from striking a balance between keeping the property owner and the intermediary on the hook.

“I’m reluctant to take the burden off the property owner, because those are the only people we have control over,” Vetter said.

Whatever the solution to this issue is may be hard to come by.

“No city has figured this out perfectly yet,” Herdener said.

City councilors plan to discuss an ordinance change in

more detail at the November work session and hope to get more input from the lodging industry in the meantime.

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