

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bob Boemer, County of Galveston Legal Department
FROM: Carla Cotropia
RE: Investigation of Harassment Complaint

Judge Mark Henry received a text from [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) complaining about the behavior of William K. Sargent (Sargent) towards [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]). Even though no formal complaint was made, the County takes any such allegations seriously and I was asked to investigate.

I interviewed [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] works in the office of Dwight D. Sullivan, Galveston County Clerk and works closely with Sargent. [REDACTED] was not pleased that she had been mentioned as possibly having been harassed. She stated that Sargent is in his 70s and can be somewhat abrupt and sometimes rubs people the wrong way. However, [REDACTED] says that Sargent is a fine man and she has no complaints. Sometimes he says silly things that people can take the wrong way. She gave the example of when he leaves for lunch, he says he is going home for a "nooner." [REDACTED] states he doesn't mean is going home to have sex. She doesn't think he is trying to be inappropriate. [REDACTED] states that Sargent has never made her feel uncomfortable and that he has never done anything as a sexual gesture. [REDACTED] says that if she thought anything was inappropriate she would have said something. She would have gone to her boss, Dwight Sullivan, but she has never felt that way. She says she knows Sargent has said things like, "If you need a favor get on your knees", but then everyone laughed. She does not appreciate her name being mentioned or any claim that she was harassed. [REDACTED] enjoys working with Sargent and has nothing negative to say about him. [REDACTED] likes and respects Sargent.

I met with [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) and [REDACTED] from the District Clerk's office. They are not connected with the County Clerk since they work for John D. Kinnard, District Clerk. However, the County Clerk's Election Division shares a space on the third floor, so they are in the same work area as Sargent.

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] do not like Sargent. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] believe that Sargent is arrogant, however, they have never had any issues with him and have never witnessed anything inappropriate. Their only knowledge is through hearsay. They mentioned two incidents with other employees. They stated that [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]), the [REDACTED], was trying to plug in an electrical cord under her desk and Sargent made a comment that he had been trying for years to get her on her knees. They believe [REDACTED] complained to District Clerk John D. Kinnard. This happened, they believe, 1.5 -2 years ago. The other incident they have heard about concerns [REDACTED]. They did not witness either event.

I interviewed [REDACTED]. She stated that she did not have any issues with Sargent. She confirmed that approximately two years ago, she was under her desk trying to plug in an extension cord and Sargent said he had been waiting for years to get her on her knees. She went to her supervisor, [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) to complain. I interviewed [REDACTED] and she confirmed that she informed her supervisor, [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]), [REDACTED] about [REDACTED] complaint. Apparently [REDACTED] said something to Sargent because he apologized the next day to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] stated that Sargent said he was referring to being on your knees like they do in church. There have not been any other issues since this time. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] don't care for Sargent as a person but he has not harassed them. They are not complaining and they don't think it is sexual harassment.

We discussed how a women feels when someone is being sexual and trying to make them uncomfortable because of their sex. They say this is not the case with Sargent. Rather he is just

an abrasive type with poor social skills. They do not consider him a sexual harasser. Both women were aware of the comment to [REDACTED] about a favor and getting on your knees. They believe [REDACTED] was upset about it. They stated that [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]) told them about the incident.

I interviewed [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was in the lunch room when [REDACTED] shared the incident about "get on your knees for a favor". [REDACTED] stated [REDACTED] was upset but also that [REDACTED] had recently lost her husband unexpectedly. [REDACTED] has had no problem with Sargent. She has heard other employees say that they do not like him.

CONCLUSION

No actual complaint was made. [REDACTED] does not like Sargent. She commented to Judge Mark Henry about complaints of other women. She had not personally witnessed anything. The two incidents involved [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] denied any issue and said she liked working with Sargent. [REDACTED] related one comment that was addressed and for which Sargent apologized.

The real issue is that the District Clerk employees do not like sharing their space with the Election Division because they personally do not like Sargent. No one claimed it was sexual harassment. When we discussed what sexual harassment was, all agreed that this was not sexual harassment. Rather it was an employee that, for lack of better words, was "rough around the edges". Neither [REDACTED] nor [REDACTED] wanted to file a complaint and had no desire to do so now or in the past. There was no sexual harassment. There was no need for further discussion concerning a better demeanor in the workplace by Sargent, because he retired. The investigation was concluded with a finding of No Sexual Harassment.