

VIRGINIA:

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF LOUDOUN COUNTY

SARA LOMBRANA,

Plaintiff,

v.

CARL "BEN" NETT,

Individually and Officially as
Vice Mayor of Purcellville

and

**CORPORATION OF PURCELLVILLE a/k/a
TOWN OF PURCELLVILLE, VIRGINIA,**

Jointly and severally

Defendants.

Case No. _____

COMPLAINT

COMES NOW your Plaintiff, Sara Lombrana, (hereinafter "Lombrana") by counsel, and complains and requests relief against Carl "Ben" Nett, (hereinafter "Nett") in his individual capacity and in his capacity as Vice Mayor of Purcellville, and the Corporation of Purcellville, a/k/a The Town of Purcellville, Virginia, (hereinafter "the Town" or "Purcellville"), both jointly and severally. In support thereof, Plaintiff states as follows:

INTRODUCTION

This action arises out of false and defamatory statements published by Nett, both in his individual capacity and on behalf of the Town of Purcellville in his role as

Vice Mayor of Purcellville, and concerning Sara Lombrana. It is an action for money damages alleging defamation *per se*.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. Jurisdiction is proper in the Circuit Court of Loudoun County because pursuant to Section 17.1-513 of the Code of Virginia, this is a case at law greater than \$50,000.00; and pursuant to Section 8.01-328.1 of the Code of Virginia, all defendants committed tortious conduct in the County of Loudoun;

2. Venue is proper in Loudoun County because Plaintiff's claims arise primarily from unlawful conduct occurring in Purcellville, Loudoun County, Virginia.

PARTIES

3. At all times herein, Lombrana was an adult citizen of the Commonwealth of Virginia. She is the Acting/Interim Police Chief of the Purcellville Police Department.

4. Defendant Nett was at all times relevant to this Complaint a resident of Virginia, officer/former officer of the Purcellville Police Department, member of the Town Council of Purcellville, and Vice Mayor of Purcellville.

5. Defendant Purcellville at all times herein was a town corporate, in the name and style of The Town of Purcellville, and as such did exercise, and had the right to exercise, the powers and privileges conferred upon it by its charter and which were, or may be hereafter delegated to towns in accordance with the Constitution or laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. A town acts, by charter, through its Town Council. *Westbrook, Inc. v. Falls Church*, 185 Va. 577 (1946). The allegations against

Defendant Purcellville do not describe actions taken within the powers and privileges conferred upon it by law.

FACTS

6. In September, 2024, Sara Lombraña was hired as the Deputy Chief for the Town of Purcellville Police Department, to serve under Chief Barry Dufek.

7. Prior to her employment with Purcellville, Lombraña was employed by Colonial Beach Police Department, among others.

8. Prior to her tenure in Purcellville, Virginia, Lombraña accumulated many years of experience as a law enforcement officer.

9. Nett was an officer with the Police Department.

10. In 2024, while employed with the Police Department, Nett declared his intention to run for Purcellville Town Council, campaigning on a platform that included eliminating spending and/or reducing costs for the Town.

11. Despite the dubious propriety of the anticipated dual role of Council Member and Police Officer, wherein Nett would essentially be his own boss, Nett continued his campaign, and won election to the Town Council.

12. On January 8, 2025, Nett, as Council Member, made a motion to terminate the existing Town Manager, and appoint the former Mayor and his friend, Kwasi Fraser, as interim Town Manager. The motion passed.

13. On or about January 23, 2025, Chief Dufek resigned and retired from the department, and Lombraña was elevated to interim Chief.

Termination of Officer Nett

14. On or about February 7, 2025, Acting Purcellville Police Department Lieutenant William Michael Holman initiated an internal affairs investigation regarding Nett's work performance.

15. On February 18, 2025, Nett was placed on administrative leave by Holman, pending an internal affairs investigation.

16. To avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, the internal affairs investigation was conducted by Prince William County Police Department.

17. On February 19, 2025, while on administrative leave, Nett called Sergeant Raymond Starkey, and "offered" him the position of Acting Chief of Police. Despite having no authority to offer such a position, despite the position of Acting Chief already having been filled by Lombrana, and despite being on leave for serious violations of policy, Nett encouraged Starkey to take the job.

18. Starkey declined. Nett later "offered" the position to Sergeant David Camp, on February 20 and 21, 2025, who similarly declined. Nett offered to increase Camp's salary to \$125,000 per year.

19. Sergeant Camp indicated that Nett "offered" the job to him with the understanding that Camp, in return for the job, would kill the internal affairs investigation into Nett and return Nett to full active duty.

20. Nett indicated that he intended on becoming chief, and his overall goal was to effectuate Lombrana's firing.

21. In his calls with Camp, Nett stated that "Lombrana is defying the law," indicating that Lombrana was engaged in unlawful or illegal activities.

22. On February 21, 2025, Lombrana served an Advanced Notice of Termination on Nett, regarding IA 2025-0087 and IA 2025-0061.

23. The termination was to be effective February 28, 2025.

24. The notice detailed grounds stemming from Nett's attending a meeting on January 10, 2025 with the Town Manager (for his role as Vice Mayor/Council Member) while on duty, marking out as on a "directed patrol." Additional grounds include Nett's calling in sick on January 29 and 30, 2025, while attending a meeting of the Virginia Municipal League (for his role as Vice Mayor/Council Member) and utilizing sick leave.

25. The termination date was stayed pending the Town Manager, Kwasi Fraser's review.

26. On February 24, 2025, Nett was placed on the Brady/Giglio list by the Loudoun County Commonwealth Attorney.

27. Placement on the Brady/Giglio list is an entirely discretionary act performed at the pleasure of the Commonwealth Attorney, to which there is no right of appeal.

28. On March 20, 2025, while still on administrative leave, Nett again "offered" the position of Police Chief to Starkey, who again declined. Nett informed Starkey that he believed he would be back to work within two weeks, and that Lombrana would be terminated.

29. Upon information and belief, Kwasi Fraser assented to Nett's termination on April 3, 2025.

30. Nett was terminated from the Purcellville Police Department on April 4, 2025.

31. Nett exercised his right to grieve his termination.

32. Fraser recused himself from the termination proceedings, but not before appointing the Town's representative to the grievance panel, effectively stacking the deck in favor of Nett.

33. The Acting Town Manager upheld the termination.

34. The grievance panel decision reversed; opting to reinstate Nett.

35. The Town appealed to the Circuit Court of Loudoun County, who declined jurisdiction.

36. The decision next fell to the Commonwealth Attorney. The Commonwealth Attorney for Loudoun County recused himself, and a Special Prosecutor was appointed.

37. The Special Prosecutor appointed to the case, Hon. Eric Olsen, concluded that the grievance panel decision was not consistent with either Purcellville's written policy or the applicable state written (and codified) grievance procedure.

38. Additionally, Nett is currently under indictment for four counts of computer trespassing, one count conspiracy for bid-rigging, and one count fraudulent commercial dealing, relating to Nett's actions as Purcellville Town Council member and Vice Mayor.

39. Nett was added to the Virginia law enforcement decertification database on December 2, 2025.

Police Chief Search

40. On March 18, 2025, the Town signed an agreement with the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police ("VACP") to conduct a process to vet applicants for the position of Chief of Police, conduct interviews, and make recommendations to the Town Manager.

41. The VACP advertised the job and received 27 applications, including one from Lombrana.

42. The VACP conducted interviews, and focused its efforts on identifying the candidate who is the best fit for the department, the town leadership, and the town residents.

43. The VACP further reviewed the executive training, progressive leadership roles, and relevant experience of the top tier candidates.

44. On July 30, 2025, Lombrana interviewed with the VACP, impressing the panel of Chiefs with her effective and principled leadership, professionalism, and thoughtful approach to community engagement and internal leadership.

45. Several reviewing Chiefs extolled Lombrana's courage, intelligence, tenacity, clear communication, and integrity.

46. The VACP identified Lombrana as the most qualified and best prepared candidate to lead the Purcellville Police Department.

47. On September 25, 2025, the VACP recommended, in its professional assessment, that Lombrana be appointed as the permanent Chief of Police.

48. The VACP did not recommend any other candidate for the position.

49. To date, Lombrana has not been approved as the permanent police chief by the Town Council, nor has the Town Council identified another candidate for Chief.

Nett's Campaign to Discredit and Defame Lombrana

50. In or about February, 2025, Nett drafted a letter to police department consultant, Mike Jones, highlighting Nett's plans for Purcellville's future, while discrediting Lombrana. **Exhibit A.**

51. Nett highlights the fact that he ran for Town Council with a slate of candidates, self-styled as "Team Mayberry," committed to small-town Purcellville, as opposed to "explosive growth through annexation," as Nett couches it.

52. In describing his plan for future Purcellville, Nett alleges, falsely, that Lombrana "defied that lawful directive [to reinstate Nett to full duty status] and proceeded with retaliatory IA investigations against me and a resulting notice of intent to terminate my employment with the Town of Purcellville Police Department." **Exhibit A.**

53. The allegation that Lombrana defied a lawful directive is false. It accuses Lombrana of insubordination. Further, Nett's statement that Lombrana retaliated against Nett is also false.

54. Nett states that "I do intend to emerge from the current turmoil affecting our Department as the permanent Chief of Police." **Exhibit A.**

55. Nett reveals his life plan to Mike Jones, acknowledging that he appointed Kawsí Fraser as Interim Town Manager at the January 8, 2025 Town Council meeting. **Exhibit A.**

56. In ruminating on his plans for the Purcellville Police Department, Nett laments the "political witch hunt" against him and states he is "horny to do shit" again. **Exhibit A.**

57. Nett reminds Jones that he, as Vice Mayor, "unlike any other potential Chief, [has] the power to bring those goals to fruition," insinuating that he will use his position with the Town Council to manipulate policy at the Police Department. **Exhibit A.**

58. In giving his "recommendations" regarding certain police personnel, Nett accuses Lombraña of being subject to ethics complaints (that he and/or his allies filed); states that Lombraña acted in defiance of the Town Manager's lawful directive, all of which he alleges is grounds for termination with cause. **Exhibit A.**

59. At no time did Lombraña defy a supervisor's lawful directive, nor are there grounds for terminating Lombraña for cause.

60. On November 4, 2025, Nett sent a letter to Dana G. Schrad, Executive Director of the VACP, identifying himself as, and signing on behalf of the Vice Mayor of the Town of Purcellville. **Exhibit B.**

61. In his correspondence, Nett, utilized his position as "the Vice Mayor of Purcellville, VA and a Purcellville Police Officer," to defame and discredit Lombrana.

62. Specifically, Nett claims he was "framed by corrupt law enforcement officers and a corrupt Commonwealth Attorney who conspired to violate my civil rights under color of law in an attempt to overturn the most recent Town of Purcellville election." **Exhibit B.**

63. Nett further writes:

One of those corrupt law enforcement officers, in my opinion, is Acting Chief Sara Lombrana, who received your organization's endorsement for appointment as the permanent Chief of Police for the Purcellville Police Department. However, I understand that earlier this year your organization determined that Sara Lombrana was NOT QUALIFIED to be Chief of Police. What changed, other than her exposing the Town of Purcellville to the risk of substantial civil liability?

Exhibit B.

64. Nett attached a copy of the grievance panel decision, and highlighted certain sections that the panel, hand-picked by himself and his ally Mayor Kaws Fraser, found fault with Lombrana.

65. Nett's statement that VACP determined Lombrana not qualified is unequivocally false.

66. Nett's statements that Lombrana "framed" or "conspired against him" to violate his civil rights is false, defamatory, and insinuates that Lombrana committed a crime.

67. During the October 28, 2025 Purcellville Town Council Meeting, Nett used his time during "Council Comments," a portion of the meeting wherein each

Council Member speaks, to degrade and defame Lombraña. Nett alleged that Lombraña was "corrupt."

68. On or about December 11, 2025, Nett penned an opinion piece entitled "The Battle of Purcellville by Vice Mayor Carl "Ben" Nett. **Exhibit C.** Nett's manifesto was published, in whole or part, online and in print, by many local publishers, including but not limited to Blue Ridge Leader & Loudoun Today, LoudounNow, and the Loudoun Times-Mirror.

69. Nett's writing contained false and defamatory information regarding Lombraña, including but not limited to:

- Alleging he is the victim of a weaponized police department working in conjunction with corrupt prosecutors
- Alleging that since announcing his candidacy for Town Council, he became the immediate target of workplace harassment and intimidation efforts
- Stating "I was victim of workplace targeting to include a series of personnel actions, in rapid succession, based solely on my lawful political activity. These included sustained Internal Affairs charges by Deputy Chief Lombraña, her subjecting me to a "random" drug test on election eve, and even threatening me with termination for passing out 'Junior Purcellville Police Officer' stickers to children while campaigning for office off duty—stickers provided to me, unsolicited, by a Purcellville Police Sergeant for handout as part of ongoing community engagement efforts."
- Nett alleges "political targeting" and that "Ms. Lombraña initiated two more Internal Affairs investigations resulting in eights [sic] sustained charges and my being placed on the Loudoun County Brady/Giglio List by Loudoun County Commonwealth Attorney Bob Anderson."
- Nett further alleges, "concurrent with this [Brady/Giglio listing] the details from my confidential Purcellville Police Department Internal Affairs investigation were leaked to the media in violation of Virginia Code § 2.2-3706."

- Nett alleges the [grievance panel] concluded that “Interim Chief Lombraña and Lieutenant Mike Holman committed ‘serious violations’ of both the Employee Handbook and the police department’s General Orders. In sworn testimony, Interim Chief Lombraña admitted that politics were involved in my termination and, stunningly, failed to produce any report from the Prince William County Police Department regarding the investigation they were asked to jointly lead, while further admitting that she first approached the Fairfax Police Chief, who declined to conduct the investigation into me ‘because of its clear political nature.’”
- Nett alleges Lombraña had a political animus against him; that she “wanted” Nett to be on the Brady List, and accuses Lombraña of orchestrating a “flawed, targeted, and underdeveloped internal investigation report.”
- Nett states Lombraña “lobbied” to have him decertified as a law enforcement officer, and “feign[ed] innocence and surprise” when she provided the DCJS decertification letter to the Interim Town Manager.
- Nett alleges that Lombraña’s communications with DCJS “include outright falsehoods, gross misrepresentations, and serious omissions.”
- Nett takes final aim at Lombraña, stating “Ms. Lombraña’s actions with regard to communications with DCJS are a repeat of her unauthorized out-sourcing of Internal Affairs investigations into me back in February 2025 and her premature and unilateral communications with Commonwealth’s Attorney Bob Anderson—all demonstrating a disregard for her chain-of-command and her defiance of lawful authority.”

Exhibit C.

70. Nett’s allegations against Lombraña are categorically false, defamatory, and insinuate Lombraña committed crimes and/or ethical breaches during her tenure as Interim Chief.

71. Lombraña has sustained reputational damage as a result of Nett’s false and defamatory statements.

COUNT I DEFAMATION PER SE
LOMBRANA V. NETT

72. Plaintiff incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 71 above as if as if fully set forth herein.

73. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, "defamation" is defined as a false statement of fact published or communicated to another person that causes injury to the reputation of the subject of the statement.

74. "Defamation *per se*" takes place when the defamatory statement involves defamatory words that (1) impute commission of a criminal offense involving moral turpitude, (2) impute infection with some contagious disease, (3) impute unfitness to perform the duties of an office or employment, or want of integrity in the discharge of such duties, or (4) prejudice a person in his profession or trade. One does not have to prove damages as they are presumed. *Great Coastal Express v. Ellington*, 230 Va. 142, 146-47 (1985).

75. Additionally, "[w]hen particular skill or ability is necessary in the performance of the plaintiff's vocation, an imputation that attributes a lack of skill or ability to the plaintiff tends to harm the plaintiff in his business or profession." *Lamb v. Weiss*, 62 Va. Cir. 259 (2003) (citing Restatement (Second) of Torts, § 572, comment c).

76. Nett's statements are not mere opinions, because they are subject to being proven or disproven. See *Cashion v. Smith*, 286 Va. 327 (2013).

77. Nett, knowing his factual assertions were false, or with a reckless disregard as to whether his statements were false, made his statements, to Camp,

Mike Jones, Dana Schrad, in a public Town Council Meeting, and multiple local news outlets, with actual malice, and/or reckless disregard for their truth or falsity, with the intent to injure Lombraña and cause her employment termination.

78. The statements contained herein represent more than Nett's personal opinion, assert "facts," and are actionably and objectively false.

79. At no time did Lombraña engage in criminal, immoral, illegal, or conspiratorial conduct.

80. Nett knew the statements to be false.

81. Nett knew that allegations of a Chief of Police being engaged in criminal, immoral, illegal, and conspiratorial conduct goes to the core fitness and qualifications of Chief Lombraña with respect to her ability to work in her chosen profession. Nett published his statements with reckless disregard to their truth or falsity and acted intentionally in causing the statements to be published.

82. In addition, these statements impute a lack of ethical conduct and want of integrity upon Lombraña in her performing the duties of her occupation as police chief.

83. Nett's statements were made with an extreme lack of prudence. Nett published these statements intentionally, maliciously, and knowing them to be false, or with a reckless disregard as to their truthfulness. Nett did so with a reckless disregard for the consequences of his actions. Nett consciously disregarded the risk of this harm.

84. Alternatively, Nett negligently published the above statements.

85. Nett had a duty not to not make false defamatory statements that maliciously interfered with Lombraña's reputation and called into question her fitness for employment as a police chief.

86. Nett consciously, deliberately, and maliciously disregarded the risk that publishing these statements would damage Lombraña's reputation.

87. Alternatively, Nett negligently disregarded the risk that his statements would damage Lombraña's reputation.

88. Nett's intentional act in publishing the defamatory statements constitutes an utter lack of prudence and amounts to defamation *per se*.

89. Nett's actions are not justified by circumstances out of his control. Such blatant disregard for Lombraña's personal and professional reputation is unjustifiable and shocks the conscience of fair minded people.

90. Nett's breach is a direct and proximate cause of Lombraña's loss of reputation, humiliation, and mental anguish, and amounts to defamation *per se*.

91. Nett's actions were *per se* damaging to Lombraña.

WHEREFORE, with respect to the defamation claims against Nett, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court award consequential damages in the amount of Ten Million Dollars (\$10,000,000.00) punitive damages in the amount of Three Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$350,000.00) plus pre- and post-judgment interest and for other such relief as this Court deems proper.

COUNT II DEFAMATION PER SE
LOMBRAÑA V. TOWN OF PURCELLVILLE

92. Plaintiff incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 91 above as if as if fully set forth herein.

93. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, "defamation" is defined as a false statement of fact published or communicated to another person that causes injury to the reputation of the subject of the statement.

94. "Defamation *per se*" takes place when the defamatory statement involves defamatory words that (1) impute commission of a criminal offense involving moral turpitude, (2) impute infection with some contagious disease, (3) impute unfitness to perform the duties of an office or employment, or want of integrity in the discharge of such duties, or (4) prejudice a person in his profession or trade. One does not have to prove damages as they are presumed. *Great Coastal Express v. Ellington*, 230 Va. 142, 146-47 (1985).

95. Additionally, "[w]hen particular skill or ability is necessary in the performance of the plaintiff's vocation, an imputation that attributes a lack of skill or ability to the plaintiff tends to harm the plaintiff in his business or profession." *Lamb v. Weiss*, 62 Va. Cir. 259 (2003) (citing Restatement (Second) of Torts, § 572, comment c).

96. Nett utilized his position as Vice Mayor/Town Council Member to lend credibility and veracity to his defamatory statements, and to encourage various news outlets to publish his statements. Nett's use of his position with the Town of Purcellville implicitly places Purcellville's imprimatur on Nett's actions.

97. Nett captioned, and signed, his letter to Dana Schrad dated November 4, 2025, and his missive entitled "The Battle of Purcellville" "Carl 'Ben' Nett Vice Mayor, Town of Purcellville" and "by Vice Mayor Carl 'Ben' Nett," respectively.

98. Nett defamed Lombrana during the October 28, 2025 Town Council meeting while utilizing his platform as Vice Mayor, and speaking during the "Council Comments" portion of the meeting.

99. Nett's statements are statements attributable to Purcellville, through Nett as Vice Mayor.

100. The Town's statements through Nett are not mere opinions, because they are subject to being proven or disproven. See *Cashion v. Smith*, 286 Va. 327 (2013).

101. The Town through Nett, knowing its factual assertions were false, or with a callous disregard as to whether his statements were false, made his statements, with actual malice, and/or reckless disregard for their truth or falsity, with the intent to injure Lombrana and cause her employment termination.

102. The statements contained in the Exhibits attached represent more than the Town's personal opinion, assert "facts," and are actionably and objectively false.

103. At no time did Lombrana engage in criminal, immoral, illegal, or conspiratorial conduct.

104. The Town knew or should have known the statements to be false.

105. The Town knew or should have known that allegations of a Chief of Police engaging in criminal, immoral, illegal, or conspiratorial conduct goes to the

core fitness and qualifications of Lombraña with respect to her ability to work in her chosen profession. The Town through Nett published these statements with reckless disregard to its truth or falsity and acted intentionally in causing the statements to be published.

106. In addition, these statements impute a lack of ethical conduct and want of integrity upon Lombraña in her performing the duties of her occupation as police chief.

107. The Town's publication was made with an extreme lack of prudence. The Town through Nett published these statements intentionally, maliciously, and knowing them to be false, or with a reckless disregard as to their truthfulness. The Town did so with a reckless disregard for the consequences of its actions. The Town consciously disregarded the risk of this harm.

108. Alternatively, the Town negligently published the above statements.

109. The Town had a duty not to not make false defamatory statements that maliciously interfered with Lombraña's reputation and called into question her fitness for employment as a police chief.

110. The Town consciously, deliberately, and maliciously disregarded the risk that publishing these statements would damage Lombraña's reputation.

111. Alternatively, the Town negligently disregarded the risk that its statements would damage Lombraña's reputation.

112. The Town's intentional act in publishing the defamatory statements constitutes an utter lack of prudence and amounts to defamation *per se*.

113. The Town's actions are not justified by circumstances out of its control. Such blatant disregard for Lombraña's personal and professional reputation is unjustifiable and shocks the conscience of fair minded people.

114. The Town's breach is a direct and proximate cause of Lombraña's loss of reputation, humiliation, and mental anguish, and amounts to defamation *per se*.

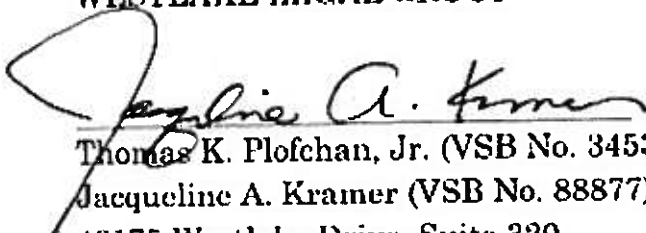
115. The Town's actions were *per se* damaging to Plaintiff.

WHEREFORE, with respect to the tort claims against the Town of Purcellville, Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court award consequential damages in the amount of Ten Million Dollars (\$10,000,000.00), punitive damages in the amount of Three Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$350,000.00) plus pre- and post-judgment interest and for other such relief as deemed proper.

TRIAL BY JURY IS HEREBY DEMANDED AS TO ALL COUNTS OF THIS COMPLAINT.

Respectfully submitted,
SARA LOMBRANA
By Counsel

WESTLAKE LEGAL GROUP



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Mike,

I look forward to the benefit of your expertise in helping determine the best path forward for our beleaguered police department.

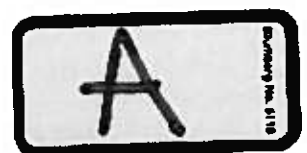
I call your immediate attention to outstanding issues affecting my employment and duty status. In defiance of the Town Manager's directive to reinstate me to full duty status from Administrative Leave – a directive supported by legal guidance from the Town Attorney – the current Acting Chief, Deputy Chief Sara Lombrana, defied that lawful directive and proceeded with retaliatory IA investigations against me and a resulting notice of intent to terminate my employment with the Town of Purcellville Police Department. I remain unable to access the Purcellville Police Department headquarters or my work email. I was forced to seek continuance in a criminal proceeding scheduled for February 26, because I cannot access my case file and evidence.

Following resolution of that issue, I request appointment as your second-in-command during this evaluation and transition process. Put bluntly, while acknowledging that you do not answer to me in any way during this process, I do intend to emerge from the current turmoil affecting our Department as the permanent Chief of Police. I will be submitting my résumé for consideration of same and value your honest assessment.

At fifty years of age, with two young children, and a substantive professional background, I can no longer serve under the leadership of less capable, less accomplished, less intelligent and, I'm sorry to say, often less morally upright individuals. Purcellville may well be my final station before heaven – my last home and my last professional endeavor. Deeply rooted in this community, I am the only sworn member of the Purcellville Police Department who resides within town limits. My children attend Emerick Elementary; my wife is a member of and active participant in the PTO; I previously sat on the Board of Directors of my HOA and I hold memberships in the local Sons of the American Legion and the Blue Ridge Eagles. As Vice Mayor, recently elected to a four-year term, I have the unique distinction of determining the police department budget and, with that, the authority to directly address many of the issues negatively impacting our department.

I would like to begin working with you as closely as possible in order to learn from your valuable experience as a former Chief, mitigate my own shortcomings and knowledge gaps, and also share with you my unique insights into the Department as both an Officer, an aggrieved party with potential pending civil litigation, and Vice Mayor.

I previously shared with you a lengthy timeline of events related to unlawful retaliation and other petty harassments I have been subjected to since exercising my rights as a citizen, under Virginia law, to engage in local governance. The stress of this punitive and retaliatory action has impacted my health, my marriage, and my children. Much of this – certainly everything that has occurred since I made the motion to appoint Kwasi Fraser as Interim Town Manager at the January 8, 2025, Town Council meeting – could have been avoided if I had then exercised the political power available to me, insisting that I be named Chief of Police at that time. After many robust discussions on the issue, it was agreed that the best course of action, politically, was to put the future of the Purcellville Police Department in the hands of an independent consultant. As it became clear that Deputy Chief Lombrana and Lt. Mike Holman – both non-resident newcomers



to the Purcellville Police Department – were intent on terminating me at all costs, prior to any organizational restructuring, I suggested that another member of the Purcellville Police Department be named as Interim Chief in order to gain control of this rogue department. Sgt. Ray Starkey, my first choice, respectfully declined because – and I take this as a great compliment – he admitted he isn't as tough as me and couldn't weather the public storm. My second choice, Sgt. David Camp, initially agreed to take on the responsibility as Interim Chief, but recanted almost immediately thereafter for the same reasons.

I have always believed that promotions – especially those within a small organization – should come from within. That includes the Chief of Police position. While some might balk at the suggestion of an Officer being promoted to Chief, I note that I am not the average Officer. My professional journey began with the terrorist attack on our country, September 11, 2001 – 9/11. Exactly one year later, on September 11 of 2002, I found myself at the Pentagon as an Early Entry Trainee with the Secret Service, working Project Phoenix – the rededication of the Pentagon by President George W. Bush. I went on to graduate first in my class from the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Artesia, New Mexico, and first in my class from the United States Secret Service Academy, known as the James J. Rowley Training Center, in Beltsville, Maryland. I spent nearly six years in the Secret Service as a Federal Officer, with assignments to the Dignitary Protective Division and the Presidential Protective Division. Thereafter, I was recruited onto a contract with the Central Intelligence Agency and spent the next few years supporting the National Clandestine Service, to include warzone assignment in Afghanistan, working alongside Special Operations Forces and my NSA counterparts in furtherance of actionable intelligence and operational leads. In 2011, owing to my experience as both a law enforcement officer and an Intelligence Officer, I was asked to serve as the founding member and original Director of the Military Commissions Privilege Team at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. I supported that mission for over a decade and, in 2022, not long after moving to Purcellville, began a second career with the Purcellville Police Department. Twenty years removed from my first paramilitary academies, I again graduated first in class – this time from the largest class in the history of the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Training Academy in Ashburn, Virginia. In 2023, I received the Sheriff's Meritorious Action Award as the co-lead investigator and arresting Officer of a juvenile illegal alien, intercepted as he was about to board a school bus bound for Blue Ridge Middle School with a loaded, stolen weapon. As a leading financial crimes investigator, my work led to multiple arrests and the disruption of a nationwide organized theft and money laundering network. Along the way, I've also received a conditional offer of appointment from the FBI as a Special Agent and written and published an anthology of American History endorsed by my late friend, Hershel "Woody" Williams, the last surviving Medal of Honor recipient from the Battle of Iwo Jima. I hold a BA in History from American Military University and have taken Masters coursework at Liberty University.

I would further note that the most recent Purcellville Chief of Police, Barry Dufek, was promoted to that position from Administrative Lieutenant over Deputy Chief Dave Dailey – largely, on the argument that Dufek was a town resident and therefore more vested in the community. Prior to serving as Administrative Lieutenant, Dufek had been hired onto the Department as a "business manager" – after coming from the Sheriff's Office, where he served as a Sergeant, before a falling out with Sheriff Chapman.

As a former Director of one of the most sensitive and politically charged operations of the U.S. Government, overseeing budget and staffing levels comparable to that of the Purcellville Police Department, I operated by the principle of "whole-person hiring." I considered not only the candidate's qualifications, but also their personality, motivations, and aspirations. It's important that they fit the "culture" of the existing environment. I also operated by the principle that A's hire A's and B's hire C's (and often a few D's). I embrace and value excellence in others and am eager to recognize superior performance. As an active learner, I am not threatened by others who possess more knowledge or expertise in a given subject matter. During the last eight years of my tenure with the Military Commissions Privilege Team, after weeding out underperformers and malcontents hired by others as I was starting up operations at GTMO, I operated by these same principles and built a tight-knit cohesive team with an attrition rate of zero. I'm confident that I can, in short order, make the Purcellville Police Department a destination job for law enforcement professionals in northern Virginia. I have the passion, ingenuity, unique power of appropriation, and genuine love for people of good will. I am committed to providing quality service to our businesses and residents, unleashing our Officers to be proactive guardians of our community and maintaining Purcellville's status as one of the safest towns in Virginia. My favorite search warrant return, to date, was a text message on a cell phone, as follows: "Man, just be careful is all I'm sayin'. Purcellville PD seems horny to do shit lately." After a year of being "retired on duty" because of the political witch hunt being conducted against me, I am indeed "horny to do shit" again. I know that I am not alone.

My motivations for wanting to lead PPD do NOT include a desire to further résumé build and thereafter seek a Chief position with a larger agency. As noted, Purcellville is likely my final stop. I live seven tenths of a mile from the current police station, routinely transport my children to and from school in my police car, and stop in at my residence to have lunch with my wife. Time with my family and overall quality of life is more important to me than a quest for more dollars. An enhanced quality of life is what I want for our personnel as well – and end to pay disparity, more competitive pay with surrounding jurisdictions, a restoration of the compensatory leave bank, individual cruiser assignments, and the building of a new police station on town-owned property. I, as Vice Mayor, unlike any other potential Chief, have the power to bring those goals to fruition. As the head of our Department, I would certainly have the motivation.

I am prepared to lead on day one – with humility, recognizing that many of my subordinates will be more experienced Virginia law enforcement Officers and more knowledgeable than I on certain issues. I, as a rookie Officer, was certainly more knowledgeable than the two previous PPD Chiefs I worked under – despite their decades of experience – when it came to certain complex issues such as telecommunications search warrants, and some simple community issues like water theft reports. Police work, as you know, is very much a team sport with individuals specializing in a few areas, whether because of interest or repetition, and reaching out to colleagues for assistance on matters that match their particular skill set. With that, however, I'm certainly an advocate of building redundancy within the department – ensuring the continuity of essential operations through cross-training and maintaining regular communication. I reject the generic and mostly disingenuous "open door policy" speech given by supervisors, instead viewing it as my obligation to knock on the doors of my subordinates and engage them on not only a professional, but also a personal level. I want, and need, my fellow law enforcement professionals to be willing to risk their lives for me – and me for them. With that, our General

Orders should serve as a guidepost reflecting the spirit of our organization and promoting good order – not a hammer to bludgeon personnel, leading to timidity, inaction, mistrust, insecurity, and ill will.

My background and general philosophy provided, I'll now dive into the particulars of the Purcellville Police Department. Our authorized force level is 22 – a Chief of Police, a Deputy Chief of Police, one Administrative Lieutenant, one Operations Lieutenant, six Sergeants, and ten Officers. PPD civilian support staff consists of a Records Office Manager and an Accreditation Manager/Public Information Officer.

The minimum staffing level for PPD to operate safely during a shift is one supervisor and one officer. In the last six years, the highest staffing level attained for PPD was approximately 86%, in July 2019. At the time, there were 22 sworn positions allocated for PPD, with 19 filled. Presently, PPD has only 13 sworn personnel, including me, and two civilian staff, with vacancies in the Chief, Sergeant, and Officer ranks. Recruiting and retention of personnel are significant challenges.

PPD has been unable to consistently provide 24/7 coverage to the town and, as of today, relies exclusively on the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office for coverage between the hours of 1:00 AM and 6:00 AM. Purcellville PD operates through Loudoun County dispatch, as does Middleburg PD. The only other law enforcement agency in Loudoun County, Leesburg PD, operates independently.

On numerous occasions, Officers have been forced to work entire shifts solo due to manpower shortages in the Officer and Sergeant ranks. This includes 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM shifts when the department did provide 24/7 coverage. Solo shifts, particularly in the overnight hours, constitute a serious officer safety issue.

Interviews with sworn personnel reveal frustrations stemming from a lack of consistent communication from command staff, a top-heavy organizational hierarchy with seldom-seen officials who contribute little to patrol or investigations, pay disparity, recent reductions in benefits such as the implementation of the 40 hour compensatory leave cap (previously refillable to 40 hours without a cap), a propensity to promote from without rather than within, and a recruitment strategy that includes focusing too much on hiring new recruits for lengthy Academy and Field Training Officer (FTO) stints and too little on lateral transfers. Officers with years on the job further note they continue to operate without a full complement of law enforcement tools (TASER Conducted Energy Weapons, rifle certification, and RADAR and LiDAR certifications, for example) when a proactive command staff could easily coordinate said training with the county. I, personally, despite graduating from NVCJTA in December 2022, do not have a TASER and am not rifle certified.

These deficiencies – the lack of 24/7 coverage being the most glaring – are at odds with a department that nonetheless boasts accreditation by the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission (VLEPSC).

The Purcellville Police Department can be, and should be, a destination job for law enforcement professionals. The benefits of working for a small town police department such as Purcellville include a supportive and welcoming community of residents, the opportunity for more intimate community engagement with citizens and business owners, and a relatively low stress work environment with fewer daily calls for service, a low violent crime rate, and the opportunity for individual sworn personnel to fully investigate and manage their cases.

The proposed solution is two-fold and begins with a complete organizational restructuring. Under Virginia Code § 15.2-1701, Organization of Police Forces, "Any locality may, by ordinance, provide for the organization of its authorized police forces. Such forces shall include a chief of police, and such officers and other personnel as appropriate. When a locality provides for a police department, the chief of police shall be the chief law-enforcement officer of that locality. However, in towns, the chief law-enforcement officer may be called the town sergeant."

I previously considered implementing what I called the "Town Sergeant Model," but have reconsidered based on feedback from trusted colleagues and believe we can accomplish the same objective within a traditional rank framework.

Henceforward, the following changes to PPD are offered for consideration:

- 1) Reduce the authorized force level from 22 to 17
- 2) Reduce command staff from four to three – a Chief of Police, a newly created Captain position to serve as the overall Operations Commander, and an Administrative Lieutenant who shall also serve as the Accreditation Manager and PIO.
- 3) Eliminate the civilian Accreditation Manager/PIO position, owing to the responsibility shift to the Admin Lieutenant.
- 4) Eliminate the Deputy Chief position (a position created in 2017 because the Chief at that time was suing two of her Sergeants).
- 5) Eliminate the Operations Lieutenant position due to the creation of the Captain position, incorporating those responsibilities.
- 6) Add a Detective position with a flex schedule
- 7) Reduce the Officer corps from 10 to 8.
- 8) Reduce the Sergeant corps from 6 to 4. (From a practical standpoint, PPD has never filled 6 Sergeant and 10 Officer positions).

In short, PPD will have a Chief, a Captain, a Lieutenant, 4 Sergeants, 8 Officers, a Detective, and 1 civilian. The civilian Records/Office Manager will maintain Monday-Friday business hours. Police shifts will remain 12 hour shifts, 0600-1800 and 1800-0600, as is – A Days/A Nights, B Days/B Nights. The net result of this reduction in the authorized force level, with the expectation that the Detective and 3 members of the command staff will contribute to active policing and fill in staffing gaps, when not occupied with other duties, will be more actual uniforms available for duty on the streets. This will also provide the opportunity to mandate – not simply "allow pending staffing" – Officers and Sergeants to have a built-in 2 hour allocation each work day to work out (or read a book, or work on coursework, etc. while being responsive for emergencies), thus addressing quality of life issues. Under this structure, we will be able to consistently maintain 24/7 coverage.

This proposed restructuring takes into account the very real budget constraints, with Town Council obligated to cut over \$500,000 from the proposed FY26 Police Budget. The above modeling, with reductions in the authorized (budgeted) force level, meets that expectation while also affording salary bumps for all Sergeants and Officers. Additional savings in the budgeted overtime costs are likewise anticipated due to the elimination of staffing shortages (more uniforms available for policing) requiring OT backfill.

A more competitive pay structure, adjustment to the compensatory leave bank, and individual cruiser assignments will further aid in recruitment and retention of personnel, thus reducing the need for overtime costs necessitated by staffing shortages.

My vision: Through innovative stewardship, we will challenge the status quo with regard to the way public services are designed, financed, and delivered to the citizens of Purcellville, and we will manage our community resources with the present and future generations in mind. PPD will be a model police department for municipalities throughout the Commonwealth and support the citizens' mandate for a leaner, more efficient government.

Overview of current PPD personnel

Deputy Chief Sara Lombrana – With the department for five months. Subject of Ethics Complaints through Ethical Advocate. Acting in defiance of Town Manager's lawful directive. Grounds for termination with cause. Regardless, the Deputy Chief position to be eliminated.

Operations Lieutenant Mike Holman – Joined PPD in 2024 as an Officer. Worked for multiple departments and was most recently a Sergeant with MWAA (I think). Promoted to Acting Administrative Lieutenant by former Chief Barry Dufek, who retired from the department January 16. Subject of Ethics Complaints through Ethical Advocate. Disrupted public meeting of Town Council on January 8, 2025, with an angry outburst, in violation of our General Orders. Promoted to Operations Lieutenant from Acting Administrative Lieutenant by Acting Chief Lombrana, despite no vacancy in that position (Lt. Moskowitz is the Operations Lieutenant). Position to be eliminated, replaced with Captain position.

Operations Lieutenant Scott Moskowitz – Retired from Fairfax County and with Purcellville for maybe five years or so. Subject of Ethics Complaint through Ethical Advocate (this is the Lt. who led the first sham IA investigation, disarming me while in full uniform and putting me in the suspect interview room). Shortly thereafter, summer 2024, Moskowitz disappeared from the office and was not seen, and seldom heard from, until a few weeks ago after I brought his prolonged absence to the attention of the Town Manager. His son reportedly has cancer. His leave/duty status has been a mystery to the entire department. Believed to be on his way out, trying to reach a milestone date for Town benefits. This Lt. has always been a toxic personality. Position to be eliminated (again, the Operations Lieutenant position will be replaced by the new Captain position).

Sergeant Ray Starkey – Ray has been with PPD since June 2019 and previously served 5 1/2 years with Prince William County. He is more interested in the administrative side of things than

street policing and has tried to keep a low profile as midnight Sergeant. "They wanted a security guard, so I became a security guard" was a quote of his during an early conversation. Tired of being chastised for being "too proactive," Ray became what I would call the in-house lawyer, holding management accountable for their own policy inconsistencies. He was subject to a recent body worn camera IA – he believes, as cover, for one initiated against me for retaliatory (political) purposes, and shares my overall view of the current culture at PPD. As noted, I proposed Ray be named Interim Chief, but he declined given the weight of responsibility. He would be my choice for the now vacant Administrative Lieutenant position (vacant because we have two Operations Lieutenants.) I believe Ray could easily assume the responsibilities of Accreditation Manager and PIO, as I plan to eliminate that civilian position.

Sergeant David Camp – He has nearly seven years with PPD and previously served 10 years as a law enforcement officer in North Carolina. Camp was my second choice for Interim Chief and likewise declined given the weight of responsibility. His expressed desire is to stay with PPD for the remainder of his career and wants assurances he can remain as daywork Sergeant and not take a pay cut. Camp wants to get along with everybody.

Sergeant Alex Burkett – Alex was an Officer with PPD when I arrived, his first job in law enforcement, and was then promoted to Corporal (a position we no longer have), and made Sergeant in 2024. Age 30 approximately, married with a newborn. Alex is a quiet professional, good natured, and a real asset to the Department worthy of retention.

Officer Michael Dickson – Michael was here when I arrived and this is his first job in law enforcement. Also 30-ish, married with a newborn. He is a firearms instructor, quiet and reserved. He and Burkett are friends, off duty, and have similar life/professional tracks. Dickson is perceived to feel slighted over being passed over for promotion, though he does not emote. Highly knowledgeable, I would promote Dickson to the Sergeant vacancy.

Officer Nelson Fernandez – Underpaid and underappreciated, Nelson probably pulls more traffic than all of PPD combined. He is a native Spanish speaker and serves as our translator when the need arises. He recently suffered a heart attack, age 52, while on duty and went into full cardiac arrest at the hospital. Returned to active duty, he consistently makes traffic stops throughout the day, gives time and attention to the schools during morning drop-offs, and is an outstanding police officer. He struggles with reports, though improving, which I attribute to English as a second language. He was an auxiliary Officer in Fairfax for many years prior to joining PPD and preceded my employment with PPD by about a year.

Officer Carl "Ben" Nett – yours truly

Officer Larry Michelli – Age 23 approximately, a native of New Jersey, and in his second year with PPD. Larry moved here with his girlfriend, whose brother, Belaal Khan, relocated from New Jersey to take a job with PPD. Khan was my academy classmate, representing Purcellville, and was terminated during the FTO process over vision issues (Khan's vision was flagged by INOVA during the medical pre-screen, but he was granted a waiver by then Administrative Lieutenant and later Chief, Barry Dufek. Khan excelled at driving and shooting at the academy, day and night, and was terminated prematurely and unjustly in the view of many. He has an

active lawsuit against the town). Michelli's long-term commitment, therefore, is unknown. He has a gregarious and engaging personality, is the ideal community policing Officer, and is proactive and should be retained.

Officer Christoff Botha – Botha, in his 50's, is a newcomer to PPD and has prior law enforcement experience. A native of South Africa, he was a member of that country's military and had dreams of joining the U.S. Navy Seals before embarking on a career as a cleared government contractor. I have worked with him a bit and respect him as an Officer. He did work with Holman, previously, at another agency, I'm told. I have been informed he has made mildly disparaging comments about me in the past week, no doubt influenced by Holman.

Officer Dan Hyman – Brand new to the department. Dan worked most recently in a civilian position with Lower's Risk Group, and has prior law enforcement experience. A military veteran, where he served as a pilot, I assess Dan to be an academic with a dry sense of humor. My opportunity to engage with him has been limited.

Officer Basem Bolas – Young, fresh out of the academy and on FTO. Bolas is Egyptian born and previously worked as a security guard at the hospital where we take our ECO's. That's how he became acquainted with us and, after much questioning, decided to apply.

Christa Kermode – Just as nurses run the hospitals, Christa runs the police station. Her job is necessary and vital, and I believe she performs it well. She is not a political ally by any means, but I don't judge people on their politics. A salary adjustment, reflecting her importance, is planned.

Emily Johnson – Emily's employment with PPD predates my own, having been hired by former Chief Cynthia McAlister. Her role as Accreditation Manager and Public Information Officer will fall under the responsibilities of the Admin Lieutenant, thus resulting in an elimination of this position.

Deputy Jon Simmons – No longer with PPD, as of February 13. Simmons left for the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office for higher pay and, I believe, because of the toxic environment at PPD. He has nearly 20 years in law enforcement and is willing to speak with you, if interested. His personal cell is 540-522-5654.

The above is my assessment and recommended restructuring. For broader community context, the Town of Purcellville is plagued by outrageous utility costs. In response to an increase of 16% and 18% in our water and wastewater rates last year, along with the promise of double-digit rate increases on both every year, for years to come, I ran for Town Council with a slate of candidates. We called ourselves "Team Mayberry," reflecting our commitment to small-town Purcellville and opposition to explosive growth through annexation, as offered by "Team Metropolis" (as we branded them). We won majority control of Town government and acted swiftly to mitigate the need for further rate increases by voting to allocate 50% of our meals tax revenue to the Utility Fund and vowing to reduce spending and trim town government. Staff responded by proposing \$34 million in Capital Improvement Projects, increasing the proposed

budget \$7 million from the preceding year, and recommending utility rate increases of 18% and 22% this coming fiscal year. This is all politics, with those proposals dead on arrival.

Nonetheless, all departments – to include PPD – are tasked by the Town Manager with making significant budget cuts. Through better management and a realignment of our organizational structure and position expectations, I know that PPD can accomplish more with less – more coverage for the Town, more uniforms available for policing, more pay for individual Officers and Sergeants, more quality of life enhancements.....with a lesser budget.

November 4, 2025

Carl "Ben" Nett
Vice Mayor, Town of Purcellville
cmbnett@purcellvilleva.gov

Dana G. Schrad
Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police
880 Technology Park Drive, Suite 100
Glen Allen, Virginia 23059

Dear Ms. Schrad,

My name is Ben Nett. I am the Vice Mayor of Purcellville, VA and a Purcellville Police Officer, ordered to be reinstated by unanimous decision of an independent Grievance Panel. In short, the Panel found that I committed no violation of law or policy; that I was politically targeted, unlawfully terminated, and improperly Brady Listed. More bluntly, the evidence suggests I was framed by corrupt law enforcement officers and a corrupt Commonwealth Attorney who conspired to violate my civil rights under color of law in an attempt to overturn the most recent Town of Purcellville election.

One of those corrupt law enforcement officers, in my opinion, is Acting Chief Sara Lombrana, who received your organization's endorsement for appointment as the permanent Chief of Police for the Purcellville Police Department. However, I understand that earlier this year your organization determined that Sara Lombrana was NOT QUALIFIED to be Chief of Police. What changed, other than her exposing the Town of Purcellville to the risk of substantial civil liability?

I have attached the full, unredacted unanimous decision of the Grievance Panel for your review. Highlights as follows:

- "The difference in the application of discipline between Mr. Nett, Lt. Holman, and Chief Lombrana demonstrates that the Department meets out discipline in an uneven fashion. Chief Lombrana admitted in her testimony that she willfully refused to reinstate Mr. Nett after having been directed to do so by her superior, the Town Manager." (p.13-14)
- "Chief Lombrana's cavalier refusal to follow the orders of the Town Manager constitutes, at least, continuing and ongoing insubordination and should be of grave concern to Town residents.... According to Interim Chief Lombrana's testimony, insubordination is automatic grounds for termination." (p.14)
- "Chief Lombrana and Lt. Holman failed to follow the progressive and proportional disciplinary requirements in the General Orders and the Handbook. Yet, despite these serious violations, to date, it appears that no action has been taken against either Chief Lombrana or Lt. Holman. Mr. Nett was terminated and placed on the Brady List for minor, disputed alleged violations. The actions taken against Mr. Nett have serious, life-



long implications for him and his family. At the same time, supervisors in the Purcellville Police Department display insubordination to superiors and ignore important disciplinary regulations. In Interim Chief Lombrana's case, her disregard for the Town Manager's order to reinstate Mr. Nett was flagrant and ongoing, yet she has faced no punishment. Interim Chief Lombrana displayed the worst type of leadership – one set of rules for rank and file officers and a different set of rules for higher ranking supervisors." (p.14-15)

- "The Panel finds that these political divides motivated the Department to terminate Mr. Nett because of his election to Town Council and campaign promises for reorganization of the Police Department – including elimination of Chief Lombrana's then Deputy Chief position. Chief Lombrana's testimony was evasive, argumentative, contentious, and inconsistent. Her demeanor was arrogant and disrespectful to the Panel which contributed to the Panel giving little probative weight to her testimony. Significantly, however, in a particular moment of candor, Chief Lombrana admitted that the process against Mr. Nett involved politics." (p.15)
- "Chief Lombrana shouted over the Panel when it tried to ask questions. When the court reporter read Ms. Lombrana's words back to her, Ms. Lombrana again tried to equivocate.... Chief Lombrana's admissions and demeanor discredit the process against Mr. Nett and undermine the Department's professionalism." (p.16-17)
- "Chief Lombrana testified that she informed Bob Anderson's office of the allegations against Mr. Nett before any adjudicatory body had an opportunity to determine the veracity of the allegations. In short, Chief Lombrana acted as judge, jury, and executioner for Mr. Nett by prematurely informing Mr. Anderson's office of the allegations against him...The panel finds that there would be no reason for Ms. Lombrana to inform Mr. Anderson's office about the allegations at this time except that she wanted Mr. Nett to be on the Brady List." (p.17)
- "Another factor into the political nature of the investigation is Chief Lombrana's testimony that before she approached Prince William County to conduct the IA investigation, she approached the Fairfax County Chief of Police. Chief Lombrana testified that the Fairfax Chief of Police would not conduct the IA investigation into Mr. Nett because of its clear political nature." (p.18)

Ms. Schrad, were you aware of the unanimous decision of the independent Grievance Panel prior to your (VACP) endorsement of Sara Lombrana as permanent Chief of Police for the Purcellville Police Department? If not, would the VACP like to reconsider and rescind that endorsement?

With that, I respectfully pose the following additional questions to you, in your capacity as Executive Director of the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police & Foundation.

As it relates to your organization's endorsement of Sara Lombrana as Purcellville Chief of Police, did you have any communications with the Town Attorney, John Cafferky, or the HR attorney hired to handle personnel matters on behalf of the Town, Robert Sproul? Did you have any communication with or receive any input from current or former members of the Purcellville

Police Department? Did you have any communication with or receive any input from the police department consultant, Mike Jones? Did you have any communication with or receive any input from any members of the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office? Did you have any communication with or receive input from any elected members of the Town of Purcellville or any Town of Purcellville staff? If so, who, when, and by what means?

My questions are purely fact-finding in nature, non-accusatory, and without presumption of any ill intent on the part of the VACP. Again, thank you for your anticipated prompt response.

Respectfully,

Carl "Ben" Nett
Vice Mayor, Town of Purcellville

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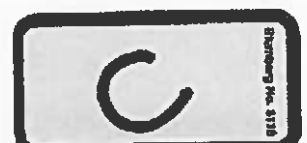
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The Battle of Purcellville

December 16, 2025 / No Comments (<https://blueridgeleader.com/the-battle-of-purcellville/#respond>)



By Vice Mayor Carl "Ben" Nett

After a two decade career in national security positions with the Secret Service, the CIA, and the Department of Defense, holding an active TS//SCI security clearance throughout, followed by a second career as a small town cop with the Purcellville Police Department—graduating first in class from the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Training Academy in December 2022, receiving the Sheriff's Meritorious Action Award in 2023, and being named Officer of the Year in 2024—I appreciate this opportunity to explain, after so much negative publicity, why I, after winning election to the Purcellville Town Council, was framed with eight sustained administrative charges, Brady listed, fired, indicted, and now decertified.

Did I wake up one morning, take a crazy pill and suddenly decide to betray my own core values and lifetime of public service, or could it be that I am the victim of a weaponized police department working in conjunction with corrupt prosecutors, coordinating closely with opposition Town Council members, to violate my civil rights under color of law in retaliation for my political votes?

I firmly assert the latter, which is why I initiated a meeting with the FBI and why I am urging the Department of Justice to initiate a civil rights investigation into the Purcellville Police Department and the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office.

In September 2024, Sara Lombrana was hired as Purcellville Deputy Chief of Police—a position I was already campaigning to eliminate as part of a broader plan to restructure the Town of Purcellville government, in general, and the Police Department in particular.

The Deputy Chief of Police position was created in 2017 in response to a contract dispute between the Town and two of her sergeants. With that lawsuit settled, and all parties having moved on, there was no longer a need for that position.

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Today

I likewise noted that the Purcellville Police Department, for years, has failed to provide consistent 24/7 service to residents and businesses, despite public claims to the contrary. I diagnosed the department as being top-heavy, with four command staff being paid six-figure salaries and contributing little to the patrol, investigative, or traffic enforcement missions.

Concurrent with that, an underpaid Officer corps resulted in unsustainable attrition levels. In my view, we were either going to have a fully functioning police department or transfer full-time policing services to the Sheriff's Office.

Since announcing my candidacy for Town Council, as a police officer, exercising my rights under Virginia law, I became the immediate target of workplace harassment and intimidation efforts, to include the opposing candidates' political signs being placed within the landscaping of the Purcellville Police Department headquarters, where I reported for duty each workday.

Police department leadership made no effort to have those political signs removed, despite complaints from numerous citizens—some of whom, ironically, thought the police department was publicly endorsing the police officer running for Town Council, me. They weren't.

To the contrary, I was victim of workplace targeting to include a series of personnel actions, in rapid succession, based solely on my lawful political activity. These included sustained Internal Affairs charges by Deputy Chief Lombrana, her subjecting me to a "random" drug test on election eve, and even threatening me with termination for passing out "Junior Purcellville Police Officer" stickers to children while campaigning for office off duty—stickers provided to me, unsolicited, by a Purcellville Police Sergeant for handout as part of ongoing community engagement efforts.

On November 19, 2024, two weeks after my election victory, Human Resources Director LaDonna Snellbaker sent me an email demanding my resignation from either the Purcellville Town Council or the Purcellville Police Department, citing Section 10.3.B.1 of the Town of Purcellville Employee Handbook, which states: "No employee shall continue in their position with the Town after election to any public office in the Town."

This change, unbeknownst to me, had been made to the Town of Purcellville Employee Handbook during a July 2024 revision. The previous version of the Town of Purcellville Employee Handbook was dated 19 years before, in 2005, and it did not contain any such provision.

The timing of this unannounced change to the Town of Purcellville Employee Handbook, only 4 months before election day in November of 2024, and the unexplained reason for the change, are inherently suspicious.

On November 25th, 2024, the Executive Director of the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council, Stewart Petoe, affirmed that I could exercise my legal right to hold elected office under Virginia state law, specifically referencing Virginia Code §2.2-3107 (B) (1) (ii), noting, "It is quite clear, and applies to your situation. It is permissible

for you, under COIA, to remain a member of the town police department and take your seat on the town council."

The offending provision of the Loudoun County Code was removed.

The political targeting that I experienced as both a candidate for Town Council and Councilman-elect, continued after my taking office in January 2025. Based on two events—my participation in a brief agenda work session at Town Hall at the direction of the Town Manager, while on duty and remaining in service and responsive to calls, and my attendance at a conference in Richmond while on sick leave due in part to an injured knee that prevented me from driving an automobile.

Ms. Lombrana initiated two more Internal Affairs investigations resulting in eight sustained charges and my being placed on the Loudoun County Brady/Giglio List by Loudoun County Commonwealth Attorney Bob Anderson. Mr. Anderson placed me on the Brady list for non-Brady offenses—minor, disputed alleged administrative violations, and he did so two days prior to the deadline for me to contest the charges (which I did) pursuant to the Law Enforcement Officer's Procedural Guarantee Act, effectively denying me due process.

Mr. Anderson's premature decision was timed for maximum political effect—publicly released in advance of the February 25, 2025 Town Council meeting, so that I could be publicly mocked for being Brady listed.

Concurrent with this, the details from my confidential Purcellville Police Department Internal Affairs investigation were leaked to the media in violation of Virginia Code §2.2-3706. Attorney General Jason Miyares has been asked to investigate this criminal violation, thus far with no response.

I appealed my unlawful termination pursuant to the Town's Grievance Policy and, on June 25, 2025, I attended a hearing alongside my attorney. The Town was represented by an HR attorney contracted to defend my termination, Robert Sproul, who is now the Town Attorney.

Per the Town's grievance policy, devised and executed by Mr. Sproul and monitored by then Town Attorney John Cafferky, I, as the grievant, chose one of the panel members. I did not choose a campaign donor, or a family member, or a personal friend. I chose an attorney, a member of my neighborhood HOA, who I knew would be fair and impartial and who I knew would act ethically, and who I knew had the intellectual substance to discern fact from fiction.

The Town chose one of the panel members. The Town's choice of panel member was approved by the attorney representing the Town to ensure impartiality. Those two panel members then chose the third and final member. Two of the three panel members were complete strangers to me and are not Town of Purcellville residents.

As you will read in the unanimous decision of the Grievance Panel, dated June 28, 2025, my termination from the Purcellville Police Department was not rooted in any lawful misconduct or policy violation. Instead, the evidence strongly suggests a coordinated political hit job—one, I believe, led by Councilwoman Erin Rayner—to eliminate a political rival and ultimately reclaim a voting majority on the Town Council.

"No allegation made by the Town or otherwise is supported by the evidence" wrote the Panel. To the contrary, the Panel concluded that Interim Chief Sara Lombrana and Lieutenant Mike Holman committed "serious violations" of both the Em ^{Blue Ridge} LEADER & LOUDOUN ^{Today} Department's General Orders. ^(https://blueridgeleader.com/)

In sworn testimony, Interim Chief Lombrana admitted that politics were involved in my termination and, stunningly, failed to produce any report from the Prince William County Police Department regarding the investigation they were asked to jointly lead, while further admitting that she first approached the Fairfax Police Chief, who declined to conduct the investigation into me "because of its clear political nature."

Based on a flawed, targeted, and underdeveloped internal investigation report, Chief Lombrana testified that she informed Bob Anderson's office of the allegations against me "before any adjudicatory body had an opportunity to determine the veracity of the allegations. The Panel finds that there would be no reason for Ms. Lombrana to inform Mr. Anderson's office about the allegations at this time except that she wanted Mr. Nett to be on the Brady List."

Despite alleged truthfulness violations on my part, Acting Chief Lombrana was unable to cite specific instances in which I allegedly lied. "I don't have any," she admitted, under oath. The Town's counsel stipulated during the Hearing that Councilwoman Erin Rayner was the sole source for the Prince William IA investigation's determination that I was not sick while in Richmond.

Councilwoman Erin Rayner corroborated that she had been the former campaign manager for Nicole Wittmann, the current Deputy Commonwealth's Attorney in Bob Anderson's office, further underscoring the political entanglements surrounding the investigation.

The Panel continued: "Mr. Nett was terminated and placed on the Brady List for minor, disputed alleged violations. The actions taken against Mr. Nett have serious, life-long implications for him and his family. At the same time, supervisors in the Purcellville Police Department display insubordination to superiors and ignore important disciplinary regulations ... Interim Chief Lombrana displayed the worst type of leadership—one set of rules for rank and file officers and a different set of rules for higher ranking supervisors ...

"The Panel has determined that Mr. Nett was truthful and justified in taking all of the actions alleged in Mr. Anderson's February 24, 2025 Brady List letter ... it is clear to this Panel that Mr. Nett was not guilty of any malfeasance in connection with the events listed in Mr. Anderson's Brady List letter."

The Panel ordered that I be reinstated to the Purcellville Police Department with full back pay and benefits and payment of attorney fees. On July 10, 2025, pursuant to the Town's Grievance policy, and owing to Town Manager Fraser's conflict due to his being called as a witness in the case, the unanimous decision of the Grievance Panel was forwarded to the Chief Judge of Loudoun Circuit Court for implementation.

On Monday, October 27, 2025, four months after the Grievance Panel Decision, the Chief Judge of Loudoun Circuit Court, Judge Fleming, issued an order stating that he didn't have jurisdiction in the matter and punted it back to the Town.

I make no judgment on that. I'm not an attorney. What I can assess is that on October 24, 2025, while this matter was being heard, I observed the courtroom presence of Mike Cox, Bob Anderson's investigator, staring down the judge from the back of the court room.

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Following the Judge's dismissal of the petition for lack of subject matter jurisdiction, the Grievance Panel Decision was placed in the hands of Purcellville's Acting Town Manager, Diana Hays, whose commentary and actions since January 2025 clearly indicate she is a political adversary.

Her sole authority and responsibility was to determine whether the relief ordered by the panel—reinstatement with back pay and benefits and payment of reasonable attorney fees—is consistent with written policy. It clearly is. Her function in this matter is purely ministerial.

Diana Hays was advised by the Town's Attorney of record and the incoming Town Attorney, who, by the way, was approved by unanimous vote of the Town Council, to confirm that the relief ordered by the Panel is consistent with the Town's Grievance Policy and formally implement the order. She was reportedly told the same thing by an attorney with VRSA, the Town's insurance carrier. Yet, she continued to take no action—even beyond week two.

At the November 12, 2025, Town Council meeting, the Council majority appointed a new Interim Town Manager, Mr. Tony Sabio—an individual recommended by several current and former federal law enforcement Agents, and who I know from the Secret Service Academy. The political opposition focused on the Grievance Panel Decision—claiming we installed a friend of mine to give me back my job. That is demonstrably false for two reasons.

First, there is nothing to give me. The unanimous Decision of the Grievance Panel is a final order that no Town Manager, whether friend or foe, no judge, no elected official can overturn by substituting his or her judgment for that of the Grievance Panel.

Second, if we wanted Mr. Sabio to be the one to implement the Grievance Panel Decision, then we would have appointed him as Interim Town Manager effective that night, immediately stripping Diana Hays of all authority. We very deliberately did not do that. Instead, we appointed Mr. Sabio as Interim Town Manager effective Friday, November 14, 2025—two days later.

Then, in a vote I recused myself from, a motion was made to have the Town Council direct still Acting Town Manager Diana Hays to either implement the Decision of the Grievance Panel or notify Town Council of her refusal to do so by Thursday, November 13, 2025.

That motion failed 3-3, as I predicted it would, because Councilmembers Caleb Stought, Erin Rayner, and Kevin Wright voted against the motion to direct Diana Hays to take some action, after sitting on this for now 2 ½ weeks, reportedly ignoring advice from three attorneys who don't represent my interests, but rather those of the Town.

The very next day, as I also predicted would happen, still Acting Town Manager Diana Hays—after sitting on the Grievance Panel Decision for 2 ½ weeks, refusing to perform her ministerial duties contrary to advice and counsel reportedly given her by numerous attorneys, decided to recuse herself from the matter, transmitting notice of same to Commonwealth Attorney Bob Anderson, via email at 1:39 p.m. on November 13, 2025, putting this matter before his

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This, despite the Town Attorney's judgment and order, a conflict of interest and despite Ms. Hays previously asserting to the Town Attorney that she did not have a conflict of interest and could decide the matter fairly.

Bob Anderson, however, has a direct personal involvement in the matters giving rise to the grievance. On November 17, 2025, he referred the matter to Eric Olsen, his buddy, the individual prosecuting me in retaliation for having been fully exonerated by that same Grievance Panel Decision (The subpoenas for the Grand Jury were signed the very next business day following the issuance of the unanimous decision of the Grievance Panel).

On November 24, 2025, Mr. Olsen, ignoring his own conflict of interest, provided an analysis that consisted entirely of issues not within the scope of his assigned review, finding fault with the Town's Grievance Process—a grievance process that was devised and overseen by the HR Attorney, now the Town Attorney.

Bob Anderson, in recusing himself, should have referred the Grievance Panel Decision to a neutral and detached third-party. But, as the Panel's decision is devastating to him personally, he tried to put the fix in—by giving it to his good buddy, Eric Olsen.

Mr. Olsen, given his own conflict of interest, could have and should have recused himself from the matter, but he didn't. And then, because he has no authority to overturn the finding of the Grievance Panel, and because the Grievance Panel decision is, again, devastating to his friend, Loudoun County Commonwealth Attorney Bob Anderson, and because the Grievance Panel decision and the irrefutable evidence upon which that decision is based is further devastating to the credibility of many of the witnesses Eric Olsen relied on for the Grand Jury, and because the only answer to the only question before Eric Olsen—the question of whether the relief granted by the Grievance Panel is consistent with the Town's written policy—is "yes," Eric Olsen avoided the question entirely and redefined his role, claiming that the Town's Grievance Policy was flawed. His unsolicited and unpermitted attack on the Panel decision itself was invalid.

Eric Olsen's invalid legal opinion placed the Grievance Panel Decision back before the Town. Under Virginia law, "the decision of the Panel or hearing officer shall be final and binding" and the only point at issue is whether the Panel ordered the proper relief.

Mr. Olsen did not answer that question, because the answer is "yes." He doesn't want to say yes because he is not a neutral and detached third party. He is a party to the conspiracy to deprive me of my civil rights under color of law.

So, as part of the ongoing attempt to pre-empt official implementation of that Grievance Panel Order, Sara Lombrana lobbied to have me decertified as a law enforcement officer. In a letter dated December 2, 2025, the Department of Criminal Justice Services informed me of my decertification, based solely on the issues surrounding my termination and Brady listing—all of which were determined to be unfounded by the unanimous decision of the Grievance Panel, following a full day evidentiary hearing.

That decertification is being appealed, with DCJS now being fully apprised of Ms. Lombrana's history.

Sara Lombrana, feigning innocence and surprise, provided this two-page decertification letter from DCJS to the Interim Town Manager. What she didn't provide him was the accompanying DCJS file, which includes months of correspondence between Blue Ridge Leader & Loudoun County. <https://blueridgeleader.com/>

In her email of July 24, 2025, to Jonathan D. Banberger, the Law Enforcement Decertification Coordinator/Division of Law Enforcement, Ms. Lombrana wrote: "Jon. The decision was submitted to the Court for its consideration on July 9th, and we have not yet received a ruling."

Regardless, we will not have a Brady officer in our ranks. And the decision is as it stands and will not be reversed. I hope this helps. Sara."

Thus, Ms. Lombrana asserted, in writing, that her word is final – due process being of no consequence.

More recently, on November 25, 2025, Ms. Lombrana wrote to Mr. Banberger: "Jonathan, I have attached the court's decision for Carl Nett's case. Mr. Nett will not be reinstated. Thank you."

What Ms. Lombrana was actually referencing, in that November 25 email, was the Letter of Opinion from Eric Olsen, issued the previous day, November 24, and which is just that—a letter of opinion that, as noted, is a nullity as Mr. Olsen exceeded the scope of his review, and the Grievance Panel Decision does in fact stand.

Acting Chief Lombrana never included the Purcellville Town Manager or Town Attorney in any of her correspondence with DCJS, because her communications include outright falsehoods, gross misrepresentations, and serious omissions.

Ms. Lombrana's actions with regard to communications with DCJS are a repeat of her unauthorized out-sourcing of Internal Affairs investigations into me back in February 2025 and her premature and unilateral communications with Commonwealth's Attorney Bob Anderson—all demonstrating a disregard for her chain-of-command and her defiance of lawful authority. As Yogi Berra said, "It's Déjà vu all over again."

Amidst all the political nastiness, I ask my fellow citizens to please understand and never lose sight of this underlying truth: Had I not been elected to public office, exercising my rights under Virginia Law to participate in local governance, as a first responder, campaigning on a public pledge to reduce utility rates, oppose annexations into the town for commercial and industrial development, and streamline local government, to include the Police Department, then I would not have been framed and fired by the Police Department.

Had I not contested my unlawful termination from the Purcellville Police Department, and prevailed, and had Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney Bob Anderson's efforts to violate my civil rights not been exposed and subsequently rebuked by the unanimous finding of an independent panel, then I would not have been criminally indicted and subjected to this ongoing legal dispute over implementation of the Grievance Panel Decision and Order—which, again, is personally and professionally devastating to individuals in the Purcellville Police Department, the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, and beyond.

For these reasons, I again appeal to the U.S. Department of Justice to raise a formal civil rights investigation into the Purcellville Police Department, the Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, and the Purcellville Town Government as a whole, to allow me access to the Grand Jury transcripts which, I believe, indicate a lack of probable cause to support any of the charges against me—further indicating a weaponization of the criminal justice apparatus for purely political purposes.

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