

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

RE: OPEN LETTER TO QUINCY PARK DISTRICT STAFF

By: Trent Lyons

To the staff, past and present, of the Quincy Park District – I have failed you, and for that I am truly sorry.

When I joined the board, appointed to complete the remaining term of another commissioner, I had high hopes for what we could accomplish. I grew up in this park system. My father had retired after 40+ years with the Park District just a few months prior to my appointment. I was excited at the prospect of being a part of a group dedicated to enriching our community, protecting green spaces, promoting fun, and doing a damn good job of it.

In the beginning, I assumed I would complete this remaining term and then run for another in 2025. Instead, I watched as the petition deadline came and went. I don't really have to say anything – I could simply serve my remaining months and *poof* disappear. To those I've told of my intention not to run, I've given the same vague explanation of "not being built for politics". This is not a lie, but it's also not the full truth. Far too many people have come before me and told the same half-truth about why they only chose to serve their single term and *poof* disappear. It's not about politics, policy, or even time – it's about the toxicity and abhorrent behavior of a single, long-serving staple of the Quincy Park Board – John Frankenhoff.

John Frankenhoff's history of manipulation, bullying, harassment, and abuse would almost be impressive if it wasn't disgusting. For over twenty years, he has served as a commissioner, and for many years of those years as the Board's President. To the public, John probably seems like a pretty stand-up guy. He has dedicated a lot of time and effort to the Quincy Park District – and that could be commended. At the same time, he has gone un-checked and allowed to do whatever he pleases throughout his tenure. From regularly sending up to a dozen emails in the middle of the night to the Executive Director (expecting answers first thing in the morning or he would start calling/show up), to scheming and undermining the sitting President of the Board (Jarid Jones) for his entire term due to sour grapes. Speaking of former President Jones – did anyone wonder why the Board would vote a brand-new commissioner as President at their first meeting? It was because multiple members of staff threatened to quit if John Frankenhoff retained his leadership seat. They were tired of feeling as though they served under a tyrant who cared little for the people working day in and day out, and more about the glory of "his accomplishments".

I have been lucky to hold many people-management roles in my career. I have fallen on my face, learned a lot of lessons, and fought hard to be better for those I had the privilege to lead. John Frankenhoff is not a leader. He is a bully – one who is only loyal to whatever side he can manipulate easiest. I have seen his lack of acumen, his vitriol, both verbal and written, and actively watched as Board leadership has had to spend more time putting out the fires he starts than actually leading the Board.

This is a man that – despite over 20 years of experience – does not understand the line between staff, daily operations, and the actual guide and advise function of a Board. John has regularly

broken the chain of command, going directly to staff members to demand answers on the spot, rather than working through the Executive Director.

This is a man that – despite over 20 years of experience – does nothing toward attempting to share his knowledge toward building a better board, but instead holds it over everyone’s head and waits for the perfect “gotcha!” moment to call someone out at a Board meeting.

This is a man that – despite over 20 years of experience – would get upset at a Board meeting and then choose to curse, in anger, at a director minutes later because they can’t control their emotions like an adult. For someone so quick to take credit for the fiscal health of the Quincy Park District, he doesn’t seem too concerned with the financial liability his own behavior puts the district in.

I began this letter with an apology, and I genuinely mean it. When I joined the board, I had heard of John Frankenhoff’s reputation – but it’s my personal policy to give everyone a chance. It didn’t take long for me to validate everything I had heard and more. It broke my heart to hear from staff about their stress and anxiety. Never knowing when this man might show up and what he would be demanding and of whom. When current Board President Mark Philpot and I were voted into Board leadership, we had a goal to minimize John’s negative impact and work toward a better, healthier environment for staff. Despite my best efforts, I feel that I failed you. Just like so many before me – better men and women even - who saw the same thing, and realized they too were powerless to do anything.

John Frankenhoff is an elected official. There is no boss to appeal to other than you, the literal citizens of Quincy. My goal in writing this is to finally give a voice to so many who have suffered under John Frankenhoff’s “leadership” and to make it clear that – while you can’t be removed from public office for being a toxic bully – you can have your actions made public so the citizens know who they have representing them.

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

- Edmund Burke