

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF GIBBONS HELD ON
FRIDAY MAY 20, 2022, AT 4807 – 50th AVENUE IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Council Present: Mayor Dan Deck
Councillor Loraine Berry
Councillor Amber Harris
Councillor Willis Kozak
Councillor Jay Millante
Councillor Norm Sandahl

Council Absent:

Staff Present: Farrell O'Malley – CAO
Monique Jeffrey – Recording Secretary

Staff Absent:


As there was a quorum present, Mayor Deck called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

3.0 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT, REBECCA BALANKO, COMPLAINT TO COUNCIL

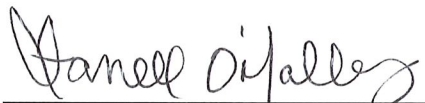
Mayor Deck read the complaint letter from Rebecca Balanko into the public record.

4.0 ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business Mayor Deck adjourned the meeting 7:07 pm.



Mayor, Dan Deck



CAO, Farrell O'Malley

Farrell Omalley

From: Rebecca Balanko <eviesdragonflies@gmail.com>
Sent: May 17, 2022 8:51 PM
To: Dan Deck
Cc: Chris Pinault; Darren McCann; Amber Harris; Farrell Omalley; Jay Millante; Loraine Berry; mayorandcouncil@morinville.ca; michelle.hay@morinville.ca; Norm Sandahl; tpretzlaw@morinville.ca; Willis Kozak
Subject: Statement of Account, Rebecca Balanko.

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

May 13th, 2022

Statement of Account, Rebecca Balanko, Town of Morinville Councillor

This statement is made in my personal capacity. When this incident occurred, I was representing within the Town, as a Council member. This statement is not on behalf of the Town or my fellow Council members.

On October 28th, 2021, at our Regional Council Orientation held within Morinville, at our MCCC the following incident transpired.

As COVID has kept many of us from seeing one another in person or joining any group related activities, it was the first time in two years our neighboring municipalities were able to connect in person. There was a lot of excitement and many handshakes, hugs and introductions to be had.

I arrived at roughly 8:30 am for a 9:00 am start.

As I exited my vehicle, I heard my name hollered from across the parking lot. At that time, I noticed Councillor Darren McCann, Town of Gibbons making his way over. As Darren and I have known one another in a professional capacity for four years, he came over and immediately hugged me, my back to my open doored vehicle.

He made an enthusiastic reference to my significant weight loss, made some noises that made me uncomfortable and slid his right hand down my back, grabbing my left buttocks, squeezing it and immediately commenting "you know I mean nothing by this", at which point I responded, "can you say that to me without your hand on my ass?"

Within a few seconds, Councillor Joanne Williams, Town of Redwater, walked up and Darren backed off. Joanne put herself in-between the two of us, I felt she knew what had just transpired and we walked into our Cultural Centre together.

I immediately found and sat with my Council members and steered clear of Darren for the rest of the day. Within a few weeks, I had a call from Councillor Amber Harris, sharing her own recent interaction with Darren McCann and opted to share my own experience. I proceed to inform her that, although I didn't feel I was in danger, I felt shame, I felt violated and knew he was aware he had crossed the line.

I also shared at that time that I had been warned about Darren when first elected in 2017. I had been told by a female Councillor at the time to watch myself with him, he was labelled as "creepy and grabby". What a horrific warning to hear as a new female Council member!

I have always tried to present and represent myself as a professional person. One who upholds the community leadership, values and regard I shared in my election platforms, during both election cycles.

I felt I needed to seek advice from our then CAO, Stephane Labonne. I shared the aforementioned statement with him in mid-November 2021 and asked what next steps I would need to consider. He shared he would connect with Gibbons' CAO.

I certainly felt Councillor Harris' statement would be sufficient and I would not be required to look for support from both our RCMP and Code of Conduct. I also shared with our CAO when Amber's statement went public, there could be a number of female elected officials come forward and share their own incidents.

I would like to state how this incident has impacted my ability to serve my community. When RSVPing to any events, possible intermunicipal collaborations or training sessions, I need to know if the invite has been extended to Darren. I have purposely avoided events where we may run into each other.

Although I feel I could "hold my own" should I be accosted by Councillor McCann, the question needs to be asked, why should I need to have my back up and be in defense mode before even leaving my home? Why should any person need to feel like their boundaries won't be respected, their body won't be respected and my personal mental health be compromised?

Of course, women shouldn't have to report abuse; and shouldn't have to suffer abuse for reporting it. But, we all know when we fail to report these instances, we create a normalized culture of acceptance.

WE HAVE NORMALIZED THIS BEHAVIOUR!

But this is the path, paved with uncomfortable objections, that could lead us out of the mire of misogyny.

If the problem is a culture of accepted norms; then logically only challenging these norms, case by case, is ever going to gradually shift that culture.

Because when a woman speaks up for herself, she does so for all women. The real question is: is anyone listening?

Rebecca Balanko

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Thank you for your message, we will get back to you as soon as we can.