

March 20, 2018

Dear Chairman Banes,

When I was first asked about serving as the City of Covington's appointment to the Newton County Recreation Commission, I was eager and honored to accept. I had just been elected to my first term as one of Covington's three East Ward Representatives, and wanted to be a driver of positive change in our community. My two children were not ready to be involved in any recreation programs yet, but I knew one day they would be. From my discussions with other Council Members, County Commissioners, and friends, I also was aware the Recreation Commission had some perceived "issues." I was excited to take part in helping to improve that perception and to make the programs offered by the NCRC better for the children of our County.

The last few months have been eye-opening to say the least. Prior to the initiation of the "quasi-judicial" proceeding to have me removed from my appointed position on the Newton County Recreation Commission, I believed all the talk about "unity" and "working together for a better Newton County." I felt, and still feel, that an individual should not be judged by party membership, race, religion, family lineage, or wealth, but by character and actions. I wanted the politically influenced rash decision making and the quid-pro-quo that defined "politics as usual" in Newton County to end. This is why I rejected the "Good Ol' Boy" candidate put up by my own party and openly encouraged others to support you, the first Democrat I've ever voted for in my life, to be the next Chairman of the Newton County Board of Commissioners. I truly believed things would be different. Unfortunately, recent events have cast some doubt on those beliefs.

Since that night in November, I have watched Commissioners and community activists, people that I greatly respected and supported in the past, either stay silent or go along with this game that's being played. The most disturbing of this was the fact that a year ago, I had a Commissioner encouraging me to "fall on the sword" to improve the perception and performance of the Recreation Commission. Today, that same Commissioner is nowhere to be found. In a seemingly choreographed effort, it has also been insinuated publicly that my decision to vote to remove the previous Director of the Newton County Recreation Commission was made based on race, which couldn't be more opposite of the truth. In this game, however, I understand some people are hell bent on gaining complete control of this county, and for them, the truth doesn't matter if it isn't beneficial to their objective.

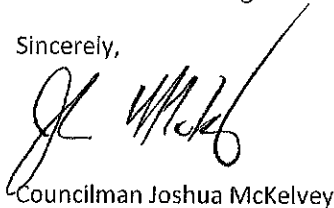
Here's the truth. On the evening of the vote to remove the previous Director, I was not aware of the protections that were guaranteed by his classification as a "Civil Servant." It was not until the next day that I began to understand, after I received a phone call from Mr. Danny Stone. Even then, I still had questions and it wasn't until our meeting with the County Attorney and County HR Director on November 30 I understood Due Process may have been violated. There was never any malicious intent to terminate the former Director from his role with the Recreation Commission. It was a difficult decision that all five of the voting board members in attendance on the night of November 27 reached after hearing the information collected by the Newton County Recreation Commission's investigative committee. When we took the vote that night, we acted in good faith, and believed we were making the best decision for Newton County. Regardless of the outcome of the vote I participated in, Newton County took that decision away from the Newton County Recreation Commission and immediately placed the former Director, a county employee, on paid administrative leave for a period of approximately 90 days after the Recreation Commission voted to terminate. At the end of that period, the Newton County Board of Commissioners stated publicly in the Newton Citizen that the former director, a county employee, had been terminated, and the County agreed with the actions of the Newton County Recreation Commission. With this information, I question the "why" behind the attempts to have me resign or have me removed from my appointed position.

Mr. Chairman, I once again challenge the notion that you have the authority to remove me from my appointed position on the Newton County Recreation Commission. Even if you did have the authority, to do so would require proof that I acted maliciously, which I did not. I also question the timing of the attempt to remove me. It appears

uncharacteristic of you, as though you acted in haste. If this decision was made with the objectives of complicating pending legal matters, placing Covington and Newton County at odds, creating racial division, and causing employees to question the stability of Newton County Parks and Recreation, then I would argue that you have accomplished those objectives.

After notifying you of my objections and concerns for how this entire situation has been handled, I hereby resign from my position on the Newton County Recreation Commission as the City of Covington's appointee. I have simply grown tired of having to fight with the County to continue my role as a volunteer, while at the same time preparing to defend against a lawsuit, and meet my other commitments at work and home. I am grateful to the City of Covington for allowing me the honor of serving them on the Recreation Commission, and for their support throughout the last few months. I also appreciate the gratitude that has been privately expressed by so many in the community, including County and City Employees that work under the supervision of the Recreation Commission. It is my hope that through all of this strife, the Newton County Recreation Commission will be able to improve its services to the residents of Newton County, and once the dust settles, we can find a way to trust one another again. Our ability to work together regardless of race and political affiliations depends on it, as does the hope of a future for our sons and daughters where racial and partisan politics will have little influence in the decisions they make.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. McKelvey', written over a horizontal line.

Councilman Joshua McKelvey

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