

Action Request



Committee:	Board of Commissioners
Meeting Date:	06/27/2023
Requesting Department:	Board of Commissioners
Submitted By:	Joe Moss
Agenda Item:	Resolution to Censure Commissioner Jacob Bonnema for Abuse of Power

Suggested Motion:

To approve a resolution to censure Commissioner Jacob Bonnema

Summary of Request:

To approve a resolution to censure Commissioner Jacob Bonnema

Financial Information:

Total Cost: \$0.00	General Fund Cost: \$0.00	Included in Budget:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
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If not included in budget, recommended funding source:

Action is Related to an Activity Which Is: Mandated Non-Mandated New Activity

Action is Related to Strategic Plan:

Goal: Goal 2: To Contribute to the Long-Term Economic, Social and Environmental Health of the County.
Goal 3: To Maintain and Enhance Communication with Citizens, Employees, and Other Stakeholders.

Objective: Goal 2, Objective 2: Consider initiatives that contribute to the social health and sustainability of the County and its' residents.
Goal 3, Objective 2: Maximize communication with citizens.

Administration: Recommended Not Recommended Without Recommendation
County Administrator: 

Committee/Governing/Advisory Board Approval Date:

COUNTY OF OTTAWA

STATE OF MICHIGAN

RESOLUTION

At a regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the County of Ottawa, Michigan, held at the Fillmore Street Complex in the Township of Olive, Michigan on the 27th day of June, 2023 at 6:30 PM local time.

PRESENT: Commissioners: _____

ABSENT: Commissioners: _____

It was moved by Commissioner _____ and supported by Commissioner _____ that the following Resolution be adopted:

WHEREAS, the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners (Board) has statutory authority to act as a board, with statutory oversight of the County Administrator; and

WHEREAS, the Board does not support abuses of power or baseless, defamatory accusations; and

WHEREAS, on March 14, 2023, Commissioner Bonnema approached Administrator John Gibbs before a board meeting and chose to initiate a confrontation with him, directly in front of the press; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Bonnema leaned down near the Administrator's face while Gibbs was seated, and demanded the Administrator answer his questions; and

WHEREAS, the incident was witnessed by fellow commissioners, with Commissioner Cosby telling Commissioner Bonnema to take a seat and stop making a scene; and

WHEREAS, on March 21, 2023, Commissioner Bonnema sent an email to Marcie VerBeek, Director of Human Resources. In the email, he highlighted the exchange he initiated with Administrator Gibbs in front of the press at a Board meeting. At the end of the email, Bonnema requested an HR investigation into Mr. Gibbs for claims of harassment, threats, intimidation, insubordination, and indecent conduct; and

WHEREAS, the email constituted a defamatory accusation against Mr. Gibbs and kicked off a harassment investigation with a third party law firm at taxpayer expense; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Bonnema’s complaint email and information about the investigation was leaked to the press, evidenced by a local newspaper’s precise FOIA request to obtain the information, and subsequent articles were published which served to erode public trust in Administrator Gibbs and Ottawa County; and

WHEREAS, on June 7, 2023, Marcie VerBeek shared the result of the investigation: “After a thorough investigation, it was determined that the claim is unfounded, and the charges raised are not sustained. The evidence gathered during the investigation did not substantiate the claim of harassment.”

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners formally censures Commissioner Jacob Bonnema for abuse of power exhibited in his unfounded claim against Administrator John Gibbs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board requests Commissioner Bonnema be removed from Ottawa County Board of Commissioner Standing Committees for the remainder of 2023.

YEAS: Commissioners: _____

NAYS: Commissioners: _____

ABSTENTIONS: Commissioners: _____

RESOLUTION ADOPTED:

Chairperson, Ottawa County
Board of Commissioners

Ottawa County Clerk/Register