



Guest Opinion: Opinion misrepresents what happened

By Dorothy Parsons, Loretta Wright, Darlene Templeton and Susanne Severeid

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In response to Michael Black's guest opinion of Dec. 22, he does anything but "set the record straight." Since he has misrepresented our actions, we — as the former temp/part-time staff of the Senior Center — feel it is our duty to tell the facts as they actually occurred.

Black states: "On Aug. 30, the part-time employees notified the Human Resources Department they were quitting. The next day, with no notice to me, the four part-time employees turned in their written resignations and walked off the job."

This is false. On Aug. 30, 2017, our letter of resignation was turned in, at City Hall, by our program director, Christine Dodson. We had handed our letter directly to her, and she accepted it on our behalf. If Black's own department failed to inform him that the entire staff had just resigned in protest of his actions, then perhaps he should take that up with those at City Hall or Parks. For him to state otherwise in a public forum like the Tidings is irresponsible.

Interestingly, also on Aug. 30, at the same time our letter was being hand-delivered, Black appeared at the Senior Center telling the staff member on duty that she was no longer needed, collecting her keys, and escorting her out the door.

He states, "I did not fire anyone at the Senior Center. There were plans to ask a few of those who quit to stick around during the transition — I even extended this offer to one of those employees who said she would get back to me and never did."

In Black's own "layoff notice" dated Aug. 23, which he sent to Christine Dodson, he stated, "To accomplish transition to a new senior program, lay off current staff (1.7 FTE) and temporarily reassign duties among other Parks employees to maintain core services." Further, he writes, "*All paid program staff will be laid off effective October 1, 2017 in order to accomplish the action of reorganization.*" (emphasis added)

So, while he didn't "fire" the staff, his clear, written intention was to lay off the entire staff of the Senior Program. Of course, he might have preferred if we had stuck around to help him dismantle this program until his arbitrarily selected date of Oct 1., but what reasonable person would wish to do that? We wanted no part of his so-called "recommendations," which essentially gutted this 43-year-old program, and the institutional memory and expertise of same, and the working environment created by his actions with such a guillotine hanging over our heads was untenable.

Black's statement that he was waiting to hear back from a staff member is not true. Our letter of resignation states that we resigned en masse in support of our program director, Christine Dodson, whom Black summarily permanently laid off while she was on family and sick leave. We felt that his "recommendations" were in opposition to the mission statement of the Senior Program and we did not intend to be used during his "reorganization" period and then be canned by him on Oct. 1.

Black and the APRC commissioners (three of whom are now part of a recall effort) have made a mess of what was previously a robust and compassionate program serving all seniors, including lower income.

We are very proud of our work on behalf of the Senior Program and it has been an honor to work and serve in this wonderful community. We will not stand by and let Black distort our actions or our motivations. We will continue to speak the truth.

— *Dorothy Parsons, Loretta Wright, Darlene Templeton and Susanne Severeid live in Ashland.*



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