



Canton makes changes at top of Sanitation Department

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Parker, who most recently worked in the Canton Fair Housing Department, succeeds Mark Adams, who since 2013 oversaw the department while also serving as the environmental health director for the Canton Health Department.

The move, made official earlier this month, comes amid complaints by a Sanitation Department employee that are pending before the city's Fair Employment Practices Board. The employee alleges that Adams and another supervisor, Ray Stauffer, created and enabled a hostile work environment.

Service Director Bill Bartos said Adams' tenure as superintendent always was meant to be temporary. The city entered into a contract with the Health Department so that Adams could serve in dual roles. The contract expires in January, but the administration wants Adams to stay on as a consultant to the trash-collection department.

"Mark's taken us to a level (where) it's time to do some bigger things you just can't do with a part-time super," he said.

Bartos also noted that Adams spent several more hours per day on sanitation duties than he was initially told the job would require. Bartos acknowledged that the complaint, which involves a claim of discrimination based on a disability, "is one more indication we need full-time supervision over there."

COMPLAINT

During a Fair Employment Practices Board hearing Wednesday, Kristen Bates Aylward, deputy chief counsel for the Canton Law Department, said a city review found the environment in sanitation was “not pleasant for many employees,” including the complainant, but that the city does not believe it was because of the employee’s disability. “We saw shortcomings definitely in what management was doing down there,” she said.

The employee has a speech impediment. She has been transferred temporarily to another city department and is expected to return to sanitation in late January.

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The employee also alleged in a grievance that Adams tried to discipline her in August in retaliation for filing the discrimination complaint. Bartos, the hearing officer in the grievance, issued a split decision in October, finding that a warning letter should be removed from the employee’s personnel file, but that it had not been written as an act of retaliation.

Attorney Peter Pattakos, who represents the employee, asked the board to delay proceedings in the complaint case to give the sides a chance to mend fences. That will include meeting with Parker and providing him a chance to change the environment in sanitation.

Pattakos wants to know that “what happened under Adams’ watch is no longer going to be tolerated,” he said. “At this point, we’re confident we’re moving in that direction, but we simply cannot say we are there yet.”

RESPONSE

Stauffer declined comment, saying only that, “the truth will be told. It will come out.”

Adams denies the employee’s claims. He said Thursday he’s suspicious of the timing of the complaint. Adams said he raised concerns about the employee’s work performance months before she claimed there was a hostile work environment or disclosed her disability.

Adams said he was not informed, and made no assumption, that the employee had a disability until May. He said that on learning the employee’s concerns, he reported them on her behalf to the Civil Service Commission a week before she filed her own complaint. He did so, he said, to have a third party review the situation.

As for perceived “shortcomings” in management, Adams said, “If the city feels there were managerial issues, they have never told me.” Adams said the timing of the change atop the department is unfortunate because it “looks like it was related to this issue.” If the administration believed there were problems with his management, he reasoned, it would not have asked him to stay on as a consultant. He believes the once-cash-strapped department had made a “complete turnaround.”

Bartos said the city plans to negotiate a new contract with the Health Department that will keep Adams in an advisory role in sanitation beyond January. Parker said Thursday he’s trying to learn the ropes of running the department.

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