



City of Westbrook, Maine

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To all members of the Westbrook Community

As Mayor, and as a citizen, I expect every Westbrook public official and citizen to treat every member of the public with respect and dignity. I expect this, not only because it is what every citizen is owed, but because when we fail to meet this standard, the failure indicates that we must carefully consider why the events have occurred.

Each of us is human and fallible. We live our lives doing our best and nonetheless making mistakes. This is true even for the finest of public officials and employees. The question is how we deal with one another when such mistakes occur.

Let me clearly and unequivocally state that the email sent to me by Bill Baker does not reflect the actions or policies of me or my administration and it does not reflect the Bill Baker who has contributed so significantly to Westbrook, first as Chief of Police, and then as Assistant City Administrator for Business and Community Relations. I have viewed this communication as I view all others which do not meet the standard public officials must meet and which citizens expect as an indication of frustration and irritation on the part of a dedicated, hard-working municipal employee. My first concern has been to deal with the frustration underlying an employee's communication and, to one extent or another; we have virtually always been successful in dealing with the root causes. When we see a problem, we try to solve it. However, I am particularly concerned that the eventual public disclosure of this or any similar communication hurts and unfairly criticizes the members of the Westbrook community discussed in the communication. For that harm and hurt, I accept full responsibility and offer my apology to all those who were affected and to all those who have been offended.

I also wish to offer some clarification of my response and actions regarding this particular communication, which I feel may have been misunderstood or misinterpreted. Based on years of working with Bill, I was initially shocked and perplexed by his communication. The words and manner in which they were presented were inconsistent with all I knew about Bill Baker – his concern and compassion for others, his commitment and dedication to the City of Westbrook, his open receptivity to all elements of growth and development for the community and his unwavering professionalism in even the most difficult circumstances.

I immediately reached out to Bill to learn what could have precipitated these uncharacteristic words. I found a very good man who was struggling with health issues that he had never

experienced previously, who was greatly disturbed by the recent rash of deadly attacks on police officers on the country and who had become increasingly frustrated by expression of dissatisfaction with his work from a few sectors of the community. These factors manifested themselves in some internal communications, unwritten and written, such as the one sent to me on February 25, 2015. Having identified the problem, we have been dealing with it through corrective action. Awareness, counseling and formal training are all components of my response to employee issues such as this. Regardless of its root causes, any internal or external communication of this nature by any member of the City Staff or public official is unacceptable and will be dealt with appropriately. In fact, I am asking City Administrator, Jerre Bryant to recommend and make available employee training programs on the use of all forms of communication, including emails and social media. Every one of us can be more civilized and more sensitive in how we use these technologies.

I again want to restate my sincere apology to those who were mentioned in Bill Baker's email and to the entire Westbrook community for this inappropriate and embarrassing incident. I am recommitting myself and all members of this Administration to work responsively, professionally and compassionately with all members of our residential and business communities. I have also attached a recent communication from Bill Baker on this matter.

Sincerely,

Colleen Hilton
Westbrook City Mayor