

## Statement of Pamela Wastell

I have not been able to tell my side of the story until now. Being sexually harassed and working in a hostile work environment is nothing that any employee should ever have to endure. Nor should an employer allow it to happen.

There is no price tag on the impact it has on a harassment victim's life. The fear alone, and the mental and physical destruction of a victim's body and personal life is more than anyone should have to bear. There were so many days I dreaded coming to work. My emotions became uncontrollable, and I would find myself crying and having emotional breakdowns throughout the day. I would cringe on the days that I would be in the office by myself with former mayor Charlie Pierce. He constantly reminded me that he was the only one that could fire me. I consider myself a strong woman. But every day I felt that was being chipped away from me. I was losing my confidence and self-esteem. I was losing me.

I had almost ten years invested in my career at the Borough, and I had a great plan. I was going to retire in five years. That was taken from me nine months ago when I reported that I was being sexually harassed and terrorized by Charlie Pierce, the person that was not only my boss but also held the highest political position within the Borough. He told me he had the power and control, and everyone knew it. Due to his previous history at the Borough including his firings of other employees, there was a lot of fear. I was afraid too. So where was I to go? There was not an HR director in place at the time to safely report it to as he had designated his right hand, Chief of Staff and previous close friend and co-worker from a previous employment as the acting HR Director.

Without a safe place where I could go to report it, I sought outside counsel to report the harassment to the Borough's legal department. The Borough's investigation found my allegations credible.

I am pleased that I was able to settle my lawsuit, but there's not enough money in the world to go through what I have. I can't deny there are days I regret and think to myself why did I say anything? Maybe I should have not reported it and kept my mouth shut.

Having faced the total destruction of my career and life through this case, I now understand why women don't report sexual harassment and sexual assault. Although I wonder if I might have been better off not reporting Pierce's sexual harassment, it was intolerable and caused great damage to my mental and physical health.

At an age near retirement, the sexual harassment and constructive discharge caused me to be starting all over with nothing.

I am unemployed and fearful of how I will make a living and fund my retirement. How am I going to survive? Pay my bills? At this time I don't have answers to those questions.

I miss the great co-workers I had the opportunity to work with at the Borough.

Employees should always feel safe and free of sexual harassment in the workplace. A powerful political figure like Charlie Pierce should NOT have the ability to sexually harass and destroy the lives of employees and must be held accountable for his actions.

I thank God every day for my close friends and family and the support of the community that has picked me up when I was down.

I can only hope that since I reported this, the Borough will do better in the future to protect its employees from sexual harassment, discrimination, and retaliation.