

Dear Fairfielders,

This week at the Board of Selectmen meeting, I asked the Town Human Resources Director Cathleen Simpson to present the findings of an extensive investigation into potential policy violations regarding the use of Town-issued credit cards.

The scope of the investigation involved a five-year look back at credit card use across every single town department.

Some important facts:

- In 2020, an internal audit highlighted shortcomings in town policies related to credit card transactions. Although these findings were shared with the Interim CFO and the Board of Finance Audit Subcommittee, they weren't presented to me or the Board of Selectmen. Unfortunately, the necessary actions were not taken to address these concerns.
- In 2022 an Ethics Board member, who I appointed to the Commission, sought follow up documentation regarding the 2020 audit findings presented to the BOF Audit Subcommittee. I welcomed her inquiry and agreed with her findings that some credit card transactions warranted further review.
- I referred the matter to the Finance and Human Resources Departments.
- The Human Resources Department opened a policy investigation.
- Of the 480 town employees, 76 employees have a town credit card.
- Investigators determined that the most significant policy violations occurred in the Water Pollution Control Facility which resulted in placing an employee on leave, issuing a written warning, and \$845 in restitution being paid back to the Town.
- The WPCF matter was referred to the Fairfield Police Department, who closed their investigation finding no probable cause that purchases were made with the intent to defraud the town for personal gain, and no charges were filed.
- There were other policy violations, but none rose to a disciplinary or criminal level.
- In the interest of full disclosure, you can read the report [here](#).

I want to thank the Ethics Board member who brought this inquiry forward and our Human Resources Department for their diligent and exhaustive investigation which resulted in updated internal policies and protocols.

Throughout this process, our Human Resources Director faced undue political pressure from certain individuals looking to direct the investigation through consistent inquiries and criticism of the process timeline. You can read the email correspondence disclosed in the report. I cannot stress enough the importance of conducting a thorough investigation and not a politically expedient investigation.

Our HR Director was able to stay focused despite political distractions. It's important to remember that most of our employees are represented by unions and have collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). When investigations ensue in a municipal environment there are rules and notices regarding these CBAs that must be adhered to under the law. My administration is committed to the highest professional standards and respecting the rights of the workers while also acting in the best interest of our citizens.

As a result of the inquiry and the investigation, we identified past policies in desperate need of reform, and we updated protocols to ensure our town employees are held to the highest standards. These include:

- A new requirement that all internal audits now be disclosed to the First Selectperson's Office, the Town Attorney, the Human Resources Director, the Chief Administrative Officer and the Board of Selectmen. Additionally, the External Auditor will be copied on internal audit findings.
- The addition of an attestation clause on all Employee Credit Card Holder forms, acknowledging their understanding of the policy and the consequences of not following their fiduciary duty.
- Reviewing all credit card policy protocols with Finance Department staff.
- Implementing new training for all employees to ensure adherence to proper protocols.
- The institution of quarterly credit card audits.
- Reviewing the number of Town issued credit cards, with the intent of reducing the number of cards

Our Town continues to face hardships in the wake of the worst public corruption scandal and environmental disaster in Fairfield's history. I will not be distracted by individuals with a political agenda critical of my efforts to correct the mismanagement that preceded my coming into office as First Selectwoman. I may have inherited an antiquated system of dysfunction, but I am not deterred by it. I believe in good government, I welcome public feedback, and I value open communication.

I will continue to provide updates on this issue as we reform policies and procedures to protect the best interest of community.

As always, please feel free to e-mail or call me.

To watch the Board of Selectmen meeting where this was discussed, [click here](#).

Sincerely,



Brenda L. Kupchick
Fairfield First Selectwoman