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Amaranth Mayor Bob Currie breaches five code of conduct provisons: integrity comissioner

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

An investigation by Amaranth's integrity commissioner has found that Mayor Bob Currie breached the township's code of conduct following a complaint by a fellow council member.

In a 17-page document submitted to Amaranth council, Principles Integrity, found the mayor breached five different municipal code of conduct provisions in a number of incidents dating back to Fall 2021.

The complaint was submitted to the integrity commissioner in January by Amaranth Councillor Gail Little. In the complaint, Little claimed Currie had engaged in inappropriate bullying and harassing behaviours and had ?exerted undue influence in the chief administrative officer's exercise of her duties? while recruiting for an open municipal position.

In September of 2021 the chief administrative officer (CAO) and clerk of Amaranth, Nicole Martin, began the initial recruiting process to hire a roads supervisor. According to the report, before first round interviews for the position began, Currie ?demanded? to be shown the resumes received for the position and proceeded to tell Martin which candidate to hire.

Issues in the recruiting process continued when a November meeting for the second round of interviews was cancelled after Currie ?tried to get himself onto the interview panel?.

A formal offer to the chosen candidate for the roads supervisor was given on November 12, 2021, but was later asked to called off to ?farm out? the hiring decision to the County of Dufferin.

The integrity commissioner's report noted that during the closed session of a council meeting in December, it was alleged Currie's interferences had tainted the entire recruit and that the process should be re-started using a third party.

According to the report, Currie suggested removing authority over some or all hires from the CAI/Clear, and following a disagreement among councillors abruptly announced his departure from the meeting.

?Such behaviour ? storming out of a meeting in a fit of anger ? is disrespectful, lacks decorum, and does not reflect the conduct expected of member of municipal council,? said the report

In the complaint to the integrity commissioner, Little also alleged that Currie had engaged in inappropriate name calling during a November council meeting, where he publicly demanded a an apology from her.

In the findings of the report, the integrity commissioner said that exchanges between Currie and Little reflected significant animosity.

?We find that the Mayor can be unprofessional at meetings, exhibiting outburst of anger, raising his voice, talking over others and yelling at them,? said the report.

In the three-month investigation, the integrity commission found that Currie had breached five code of conduct provision.

The breached code of conduct provisions including:

? Section 2.1 (preamble)

? Section 9.1 (influence on staff)

? Section 14.1 (conduct during meetings)

? Section 15.1 (harassment)

? Section 16.1 (bullying)

It was recommended a sanction be used against Currie, which according to the report is used to reinforced council's ethical framework when education or acknowledgment is insufficient.

?It is our view that a significant sanction is appropriate. The Mayor's behaviour has had a noticeable negative impact on the individuals around him, and it is Council's responsibility to exercise its disciplinary responsibly with that in mind,? said the report.

The Integrity Commissioner recommended that the remuneration paid to Currie be suspended for a period of 30 days.

Amaranth Council voted on the matter and it was passed in a two to one vote.