

Email from City Manager Charles West to the mayor and council, August 8, 2025

Text of the email as sent. Personal contact details and the names of private individuals are redacted by Lago Vista Watchdog.

From: Charles West <Charles.West@lagovistatexas.gov>

Sent: Friday, August 8, 2025 1:17 PM

Subject: City Manager Concerns

Mayor and Council Members,

In the short three months I've had the privilege of serving as your City Manager, my family and I have grown fond of this community. We hope to make Lago Vista our long-term home, even beyond my career in public service.

I'm writing to you today with transparency and a sincere desire to maintain a healthy and productive working relationship. Earlier, I copied you on a response to Council Member Roberts. Upon reflection, I acknowledge that my emotions were present in that message. While I stand by the facts and intent of my response, I recognize the importance of tone and professionalism, and I appreciate your understanding.

Recently, concerns were raised by Ms. Aird regarding the handling of public information requests, suggesting the presence of a "good ole boy" system. As someone new to this city with no prior connections, I found that characterization troubling. I have followed the law and acted in good faith, including seeking Attorney General opinions when necessary. I respect Ms. Aird and value her perspective, but I believe it's important to clarify that my actions are rooted in legal compliance and transparency.

Today's email from Council Member Roberts crossed a line for me, and I believe it was influenced by ongoing conversations with Ms. Aird. I've worked in municipal government for over 25 years and have dealt with challenging dynamics before. I have thick skin and welcome constructive criticism, but I cannot allow accusations that I am ignoring or undermining the City Council to go unaddressed. If we are to enforce a 15-day rule for Planning & Zoning documentation, then consistency across all boards and commissions, including the City Council, should be expected.

Another concern I must raise is the growing culture of recording conversations within City Hall. I've been made aware that a council member may have engaged in this practice, potentially crossing legal boundaries. There have even been discussions about compensating a former City Manager due to fears over what might be on those recordings. While I have nothing to hide and stand by everything I say publicly or privately, this environment of mistrust is deeply concerning.

Additionally, I've noticed a pattern of employees reaching out to council members directly, and vice versa. While I support open communication and transparency, the frequency and nature of these interactions are beginning to interfere with operations. I appreciate those of you who keep me informed when these conversations occur, as that is how the system should function. However, repeated directives to meet with former employees or rely on individuals no longer with the City are not productive. If those individuals had the solutions we now seek, we likely wouldn't be in the position we are today.

I do not claim to have all the answers, but I do know how to build a successful organization. We have capable staff who are ready and willing to do the work—what they need is the space and support to do it.

Before writing this message, I spent time in prayer and reflection. I asked myself whether the current level of stress is sustainable. For now, I remain committed and hopeful that I have your support. I felt it was important to bring these issues to your attention directly, as unresolved tensions can undermine our shared goals.

If I am mistaken in any of my assumptions or statements, I will gladly correct them and offer an apology. But at this time, I believe my concerns are valid and shared in good faith.

If, after reading this, a majority of you feel that my continued service is not in the best interest of the City, I will respectfully and reluctantly step aside.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your consideration.

Sincerely,
Charles

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