



JACKSON COUNTY EXECUTIVE PHIL LEVOTA

Theresa Garza

By e-mail: tgarzarui@gmail.com

Theresa:

I reviewed a copy of the e-mail you sent to the County Counselor. To say I am disappointed is an understatement. I chose you to fill the Chief of Staff position at a salary of \$199,000 a year and to receive a letter like this is appalling and a great piece of evidence to show your true character.

From early on, you kept wanting to dictate what you felt the Chief of Staff duties and responsibilities were. You were constantly disappointed that you couldn't go out to public events when I was already attending. You are an "elected official" personality so I know that is your nature to want to be out politicking but that is not the duties of the Chief of Staff and you never could accept that. And you also could not ever realize that you do not decide what those duties are. That is my responsibility. I informed you on many occasions that I did not need you to be at public events but needed you to work on the "staff" in the office and the problems in the courthouse. And you told me on many occasions that you didn't want to be stuck in the office and wanted to "be out." We talked about that on many occasions and you still weren't happy because you still felt that you were the one that created the duties and not the County Executive.

I was also so disappointed to hear from people outside of the office that you were actively pursuing a new position without even giving me the courtesy or respect to inform me. Many people shared with me that they felt uneasy that you seemed to leverage the Chief of Staff position, and possibly my position, for a new job. That alone was not a showing of your commitment to the office.

You also showed terrible lack of judgment when holding the position of Chief of Staff, you actively pursued positions with the Chiefs, the Royals, and many others the county deals with and did so with no care to the detriment that you were creating to the County. I could not believe to learn that you actually pursued a position with CBIZ when the county is currently negotiating a multi-million dollar contract when you were a decision maker on the awarding of that contract. Anyone could see that is inappropriate and unethical from a person serving as Chief of Staff and you certainly should have known that. You also purposely hid all of this activity from me even going as far as having two Facebook pages of

one I was blocked from and also by having these employment pursuing meetings labeled as “private” on your county calendar

One of the major lack of judgments and complete disregard for the ethical performance of your duties is when you continually utilized official county, taxpayer resources as your e-mail, county phone etc. to set up and pursue personal employment opportunities for months. One of the final issues that showed me that you could no longer serve in the position was when I learned that you had instructed county employees to set up meetings, schedule e-mails and other tasks on county time only for your personal effort to pursue a new position. That can equate to stealing county resources.

Your letter also shows me that you still don’t grasp that the County Executive decides the duties of the Chief of Staff not the other way around. The Chief of Staff position is historically used for several reasons as a political position. One duty is to provide the elected with someone who can work the legislature. I found you were not successful at that and clearly not more successful than I was, so I did not need you to provide that duty. Actually, you alienated the Chairman of the Legislature that would not even speak with you so that made you ineffective in that position. I also learned on so many occasions that you had met with legislators and did not even share information with me.

Another duty the Chief of Staff historically provides is building relationships within the community. I have already built strong relationships with other elected officials and the public so I did not need you in that capacity. Further, in all of your public activity, it was not clear if you were acting as the Chief of Staff or Raytown Alderwoman running for re-election. You never displayed any loyalty to Jackson County above your self-promotion. That was a conflict that plagued the office for months and was voiced to me by many people concerned about those activities.

Finally, a duty of the Chief of Staff is managing people/staff and you were not effective at that and continued to not be able to build working relationships with your own staff. For example, we discussed issues with employees who answered directly to you and you never had any solutions to deal with them and your lack of management skills continued to create problems. You did not deliver solutions but allowed the problems to linger. I needed a Chief of Staff to solve problems, not create them. Your letter even asks about issues about an employee that you supervised. Throughout your supervision you did not mention any issues of the employee’s activities. For you to bring up that issue when you were her direct supervisor is just another attempt to deflect blame for your lack of management ability.

I apologize that you thought the position meant you were in every single issue but that is my prerogative to include who I want in different issues in the best interest of solving issues not on whether your feelings were hurt. You prohibited the County Administrator from utilizing his full potential because he was more worried about upsetting you in not looping you in than in fixing the problem.

Of course, there was never any retaliatory action towards you in not including you. You demonstrated that including you created more of a problem than a solution. I did have to exclude you from issues because your participation in them made the issue more complex. You never showed me that you could be a team player but always was upset and took things personally when I didn't inform you of every issue. I also heard way too many conversations you had about issues happening inside the office that you shared with outsiders. You did not demonstrate commitment and loyalty to the county.

A lot of it is my fault because of my management style and allowing you the freedom of the position. I thought that you would assume the role of Chief of Staff with a \$200,000 salary and make it your own but you chose to be negative and jealous of the County Administrator, the Executive Assistant, and even the Chief of Communications. It was your responsibility to work within the executive staff and not work to create division. I am sorry you couldn't do that. And what is funny about that is that I never knew when you were coming or going or what meeting you may be at or what event you would show up at. You just purposely did not inform me. Recently a coordinator of an event called to ask why I hadn't RSVP'd and when I informed them that I had not been invited, I was told that they had talked to Theresa, and she said she would invite the County Executive. You did not. You hadn't but you had included yourself in the event without my knowledge. You purposely did not inform me of issues and clearly never understood there was a chain of command.

Even after we discussed a new position for you recently, you still left me with no closure with the Chief of Staff position. After still learning of your outside activities and even working with other people running for County Executive, I finally lost all confidence in your ability to serve me. I instructed the County Counselor to give you the option to resign and be able to receive a month's salary and even stretch out your health benefits and I thought you had agreed to that. You had been looking for positions for months so I thought having a paycheck for another month and health benefits for longer would be a benefit for you. I thought you had accepted that and you had stated you were going to remove your personal items on Sunday, April 19. You did not show up to do that and did not respond until the county counselor inquired of you.

Your recent e-mail shows me that you are trying to set up a lawsuit which is fine. But for you to even mention there was any action relating to your ethnicity is reprehensible and offensive. Missouri is an "at will" state and the Chief of Staff position is the most political, right-hand position to the Executive so it is clearly someone that serves at the pleasure of the Executive as a trusted advisor. When that trust is gone, so is the ability for that person to serve them. The position is much different than other positions in county employment. You will not be successful in a lawsuit and when all the issues of your activities are public, it will hurt you in future employment. For that I am sad for you, but I will not be bullied by someone I overpaid and gave an amazing opportunity who just wanted to have more of the limelight than she got. And to someone who blatantly used county resources and directed other county employees to use county resources for her personal goals.

So let me finish by a final offer to end your county employment with you starting by sending a resignation letter to me from you that is dated April 17 that includes a request from you to be paid until May 15, 2026. Upon receipt of that, we will enter into a separation agreement, and this will resolve the issue. You will continue to be paid until May 15, 2026 and your health benefits will remain until the end of June 2026. And we will both agree to a non-disclosure of the issues. This is more than a fair offer for someone who has been looking for another job for months who would still receive additional pay of almost \$17,000 for administrative leave.

If you do not want to pursue that offer, it is definitely within your rights, but I will then act to terminate your employment for various reasons mentioned in this letter and for others that I will have to disclose. I will expect your answer to the County Counselor on one of these choices by the end of business Thursday, April 23, 2026. If it is not received by then, it will be deemed as a rejection of the offer, and you will receive a termination letter. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil LeVota". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Phil LeVota