

City Investigation Supports Municipal Court Workers' Claims

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KGMI



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BELLINGHAM, Wash. – A lawyer hired by Mayor Seth Fleetwood's office to investigate reports of a toxic workplace at the Bellingham Municipal Court says she found evidence to support workers' claims.

She completed the investigation despite a judge's order that it be halted.

Fleetwood said he would forge ahead with the investigation when the Skagit County judge issued the injunction on June 4th.

The attorney he hired, Sarah Hale, says in her report that she found evidence supporting court workers' claims of a lack of break time required by a collective bargaining agreement, intimidation, and favoritism to some and unfair treatment of others.

She also found allegations of surveillance by court management both by physically following workers and with video monitoring.

Hale says the refusal to participate by the court's only judge, Debra Lev, and three managers hampered her investigation.

Lev filed a lawsuit contesting the mayor's ability to launch an investigation, claiming it violates the separation of the city's executive and judicial branches.

Fleetwood says in a statement that he has a responsibility to investigate workplace complaints by all city employees and that's his only interest.

He says he hopes Judge Lev will take responsibility for the workers' complaints and take actions to address them.