To: Editor of the Vilas Newspaper

From:

Date:

Re: Article title

You recently published an article about an administrative hearing for an ethics complaint in Vilas County. We had initially intended to keep these matters confidential. However, since the article included the names of the seven of us, we felt it was essential to speak up so that citizens of Vilas County had a complete understanding of what is happening within the County administration.

In late July/early August, the Corporation Counsel for Vilas County informed several of us that the Human Resources (HR) Manager was seeking to get a four-classification-pay-raise. Normally we are not alerted to HR actions unless they directly affect our departments. Yet, this attempt at reclassification was specifically brought to our attention. The HR Manager had only been in his position for two years. We had all worked with him over the past two years in an attempt to recruit and hire quality staff to keep our departments running effectively or for other HR related matters. We had numerous challenges and concerns, and we felt his performance, for many reasons, was subpar. Based on our experiences, we believed a four classification pay raise was wholly unwarranted. We felt it was appropriate to air our concerns on this issue and thus wrote a letter to the HR Committee highlighted with specific examples.

Subsequently, we were informed that upon reading our letter, the County Board Chair, who apparently must have been in support of the classification raise, said to the Corporation Counsel, "what are we going to do about these f _ck _ _g c_ _ts ". It is astonishing, appalling, and demoralizing to be spoken of in this manner. The seven of us collectively have devoted 142 years to Vilas County, most of us being employed for over 20 years. We manage essential departments with numerous employees and substantial budgets. Although we were not present when those offensive words were spoken, many of us have had, or know of, similar unprofessional interactions with the County Board Chair.

We also must mention another disturbing occurrence. The Corporation Counsel started this ball rolling by telling us about the HR Manager classification hike, and later related the comment made by the County Board Chair as described above. We understand both the Corporation Counsel and the County Board Chair have now denied all of this. Several of us were also told by the Corporation Counsel that we had to leave his name out of our discussions, or he would take us down with him. So that leaves us to wonder – what is the truth?

Are we surprised that the County Board Chair wanted to advance the HR Manager pay classification when similar support has never been granted to the female Directors and Managers? Not really. There is an atmosphere of misogyny, defined as "an ingrained prejudice against women", and a good old boy's network at the County Board level among some board members. We know we are not the only women who have experienced this while in the employ of the County, and we suggest that others speak up to tell of their experiences. We need a County Board Chair and Board Members who value the work of women and will remove those who denigrate female employees. We feel fortunate to live and work in beautiful Vilas County and are dedicated to preserving and improving our community. We hold essential jobs that support the county, and we need a County Board that understands that sexual discrimination is illegal, and misogyny is an outdated and unproductive force. We take this action with the hope that the full County Board will take steps to rectify these issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Burzinski, Director, Tourism Department
Laurel Dreger, Director, Public Health
Kate Gardner, Director, Social Services
Susan Richmond, Director, Aging & Disability Resource Center
Dawn Schmidt, Director, Zoning Department
Carolyn Scholl, Director, Land and Water Department
Beth Soltow, Clerk of the Court