

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.
2200 Camp Branch Road
Waynesville, NC 28786
September 28, 2021

Subject: Email dialog with Rob Hites, Waynesville Town Manager, re: hiring of Amy Murphy-Nugen.

This is an email dialog with Rob Hites, Waynesville Town Manager, re: details of the actual hiring of Amy Murphy-Nugen (a.k.a. Down Home NC hack), for her work as a “facilitator” for the Homeless Task Force. In county government, it is the County Manager that is responsible for the hiring and firing of County employees. He works at the pleasure of the County Commissioners. I presume that structure translates to the Waynesville Town Manager being responsible for hiring and firing of City employees, working for the pleasure of the Aldermen (and woman).

It came to my attention that there were open questions as to how this “facilitator” was being paid, i.e., who was paying her, and where was the money to pay her coming from. It was also brought to my attention that the "facilitator" of the Homeless Task Force, Amy Murphy-Nugen, was being paid by the Town of Waynesville through a grant from Dogwood Health Trust, either partially or in full. Diligent citizens, scrutinizing minutes of Waynesville Aldermen (and women) meetings came up with several additional questions:

- Where is the money coming from to pay Amy Murphy-Nugen?
- Was there a grant written to Dogwood Health Trust?
- The minutes say they hired her as a temporary facilitator because there was supposed to be a hiring process;
- They never discussed hiring her permanently in the minutes;
- The salary business was never discussed further.

To get to the bottom of this, a Request for Public Information was sent to the Clerk of the Town of Waynesville, Eddie Ward. Let’s follow and see where this gets us...

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

Subject: Request for Public Information - Dogwood Trust. #1.
Date: Fri, 24 Sep 2021 08:21:26 -0400
From: Monroe Miller
To: Eddie Ward <eward@waynesvillenc.gov>
CC: Rob Hites <rhites@waynesvillenc.gov>, Jesse Fowler <jfowler@waynesvillenc.gov>, Amy Murphy-Nugen <abmurphynugen@wcu.edu>, Elizabeth Teague <eteague@waynesvillenc.gov>

Ms. Ward,

It was brought to my attention that the "facilitator" of the Homeless Task Force, Amy Murphy-Nugen, is being paid by the Town of Waynesville through a grant from Dogwood Health Trust through a grant. If all of that is correct, please provide the following information, or direct me to someone that can.

1. The application made to Dogwood Health Trust for the grant.
2. The approval of the application from Dogwood Health Trust (including amount).
3. The monthly amount that Amy Murphy-Nugen has been paid thus far for her duties as a "facilitator".

Thank you,

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

Subject: Automatic reply: Request for Public Information - Dogwood Trust. #1.
Date: Fri, 24 Sep 2021 12:21:43 +0000
From: Eddie Ward <eward@waynesvillenc.gov>
To: Monroe Miller

I will be out of the office from September 23rd until October 4th 2021. If you need immediate assistance please contact Town Manager Rob Hites at rhites@waynesvillenc.gov or 828 452 2491

Subject: Re: Request for Public Information - Dogwood Trust. #1.
Date: Fri, 24 Sep 2021 08:24:48 -0400
From: Monroe Miller
To: Rob Hites <rhites@waynesvillenc.gov>
CC: Jesse Fowler <jfowler@waynesvillenc.gov>, Amy Murphy-Nugen <abmurphynugen@wcu.edu>, Elizabeth Teague <eteague@waynesvillenc.gov>

Mr. Hites,

Look like this goes to you.

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

Subject: Re: Request for Public Information - Dogwood Trust. #2.
Date: Sat, 25 Sep 2021 02:37:31 -0400
From: Monroe Miller
To: Rob Hites <rhites@waynesvillenc.gov>
CC: Jesse Fowler <jfowler@waynesvillenc.gov>, Amy Murphy-Nugen <abmurphynugen@wcu.edu>, Elizabeth Teague <eteague@waynesvillenc.gov>

Please see attached.

[**Editor's Note:** That afternoon, I paid a visit to Jesse Fowler to see what he had to offer. That resulted in the following letter being attached to this email. Starts on the next page.]

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.
2200 Camp Branch Road
Waynesville, NC 28786
September 25, 2021

Rob Hites
Waynesville Town Manager
16 South Main Street, PO Box 100
Waynesville NC 28786
(828) 452-2491
rhites@waynesvillenc.gov

Subject: Request for Public Information - Salary for Amy Murphy-Nugen.

I sent you the following Request for Public Information on 9/24/2021 at 8:24am, to which I have yet to receive an acknowledgment.

Subject: Re: Request for Public Information - Dogwood Trust. #1.
Date: Fri, 24 Sep 2021 08:24:48 -0400
From: Monroe Miller
To: Rob Hites <rhites@waynesvillenc.gov>
CC: Jesse Fowler <jfowler@waynesvillenc.gov>, Amy Murphy-Nugen <abmurphynugen@wcu.edu>, Elizabeth Teague <eteague@waynesvillenc.gov>

Mr. Hites,
Look like this goes to you.
Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

Subject: Automatic reply: Request for Public Information - Dogwood Trust. #1.
Date: Fri, 24 Sep 2021 12:21:43 +0000
From: Eddie Ward <eward@waynesvillenc.gov>
To: Monroe Miller

I will be out of the office from September 23rd until October 4th 2021. If you need immediate assistance please contact Town Manager Rob Hites at rhites@waynesvillenc.gov or 828 452 2491

On 9/24/2021 8:21 AM, Monroe Miller wrote:

Ms. Ward,

It was brought to my attention that the "facilitator" of the Homeless Task Force, Amy Murphy-Nugen, is being paid by the Town of Waynesville through a grant from Dogwood Health Trust through a grant. If all of that is correct, please provide the following information, or direct me to someone that can.

1. The application made to Dogwood Health Trust for the grant.
2. The approval of the application from Dogwood Health Trust (including amount).
3. The monthly amount that Amy Murphy-Nugen has been paid thus far for her duties as a "facilitator".

Thank you,
Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

Subsequently, I visited with Jesse Fowler later in the afternoon, and he indicated he had a meeting with you on how to respond to this request. He informed me that:

- He had been hired by the Town about a year ago.
- The City of Waynesville never applied to Dogwood Health Trust for a grant for Amy Murphy-Nugen! Consequently, they have never received funds from Dogwood.
- Amy signed a contract with the city over a year ago, to be paid when she submits an invoice. Money to pay her will most likely come from the General Fund, i.e. Waynesville taxpayers. She has not submitted any invoice yet.
- He expected to get me a copy of her contract late today or early next week.

Jesse Fowler was hired on 10/21/2020. [re: the Mountaineer, https://www.themountaineer.com/news/fowler-named-as-assistant-town-manager/article_54105520-0fd9-11eb-951a-8f90eed9134d.html].

It was then brought to my attention, by a diligent concerned citizen of the Town of Waynesville, two sets of Minutes of the Town of Waynesville Board of Alderman. Both of these minutes contradict what I had been told by Jesse Fowler (both prior to his being hired on 10/21/2020).

MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE BOARD OF ALDERMEN
Special Called Meeting
February 4, 2020

...[Page 2]

Alderman Chuck Dickson reminded the Board that a grant had been written to the Dogwood Health Trust for the purpose of hiring a facilitator for the Task Force. He said that in that grant there were 4 items listed as the goals and objectives of the committee. He added that the grant would need to be spent in this calendar year.

- Research the demographics of the Homeless and the causes of homelessness
- Examine stigmatization, criminalization and discrimination associated with homelessness
- To conduct a gap analysis to identify existing community capacity and additional resources necessary to prevent temporary and chronic homelessness.
- Develop a collaborative community action plan to fill system gaps and improve existing programs

... [Page3]

Mayor Caldwell asked if anyone in the audience if they wished to speak.

Ms. Amy Murphy-Nugen – Western Carolina University professor

Ms. Nugen thanked the Board for opening the process of looking for solutions to homelessness in the community. She said she would like to work with the Task Force in any capacity, and because of her work at Western Carolina University, she feels she could be a facilitator and bring people together who have common goals and different perspectives on how to reach those goals. She stated she had 20 years of experience in affordable housing, community economic development, and addressing social determinants of health issues like homelessness.

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MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF WAYNESVILLE BOARD OF ALDERMEN

Regular Meeting

July 28th, 2020

... [Page 3]

Joey Reece
108 Maple Street
Waynesville, NC 28786

Mr. Reece addressed the Budget Amendment that was on the agenda for approval for Amy Murphy-Nugen for her role on the Homelessness Task Force. He said that he had understood that the Task Force would be a voluntary Task Force, and now the facilitator would be paid a large sum of money. He said it is bad timing to be spending money for a part time facilitator and he would be speaking with board members privately regarding his continued participation on the task force.

... [Page 14]

G. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR AND BOARD

11. Consulting Proposals for Town of Waynesville Task Force on Homelessness

• Dr. Amy Murphy-Nugen

Dr. Amy Murphy-Nugen was selected to be the consultant for the Task Force on Homelessness when it was first formed. She has drafted two proposals to fund the activities of the Taskforce on Homelessness. Option A in the amount of \$53,487.50 and Option B in the amount of \$32,287.50. The major difference between the proposals is the time budgeted for community interaction.

Dr. Murphy-Nugen's hourly rate is proposed to be \$100 per hour, with \$4,487.50 budgeted for travel and supplies. Dr. Murphy-Nugen outlined her proposals in the information in the packet.

Manager Hites said that if either option is selected, a budget amendment will need to be completed. Two sample budget amendments have been prepared for the Board's consideration.

A motion was made by Alderman Jon Feichter, seconded by Alderman Anthony Sutton to approve the contract with Dr. Murphy-Nugen and funding proposal option A.

A motion was made by Alderman Anthony Sutton, seconded by Alderman Chuck Dickson to approve Ordinance O-10-20 in the amount of \$53,500.

The motion carried unanimously.

WTF?

So, Mr. Hites, my original Request for Public Information seems to have standing, as it appears that an application was made to the Dogwood Health Trust for a grant, to which I would like to see the response from Dogwood Health Trust.

1. The application made to Dogwood Health Trust for the grant.
2. The approval of the application from Dogwood Health Trust (including amount).
3. The monthly amount that Amy Murphy-Nugen has been paid thus far for her duties as a "facilitator".

In addition, please provide the referenced contract Amy Murphy-Nugen signed with the Town of Waynesville.

Please acknowledge this request for Public Information.

Thank you,

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

Subject: Re: Request for Public Information - Dogwood Trust. #3
Date: Mon, 27 Sep 2021 15:14:09 -0400
From: Monroe Miller
To: Rob Hites <rhites@waynesvillenc.gov>
CC: Jesse Fowler <jfowler@waynesvillenc.gov>, Amy Murphy-Nugen <abmurphynugen@wcu.edu>, Elizabeth Teague <eteague@waynesvillenc.gov>, Martha Bradley <martha@sosharpe.com>

Mr. Hites,

Will you please acknowledge this Request for Public Information?

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

[**Editor's Note:** A new person has been added to the copy list - Martha Bradley, new lawyer for the town replacing Bill Cannon, who was unceremoniously fired for shooting himself in the foot on social media. Adding a lawyer to the copy list usually prompts some kind of response from the recipient.]

Subject: RE: Request for Public Information - Dogwood Trust. #3
Date: Mon, 27 Sep 2021 19:16:40 +0000
From: Rob Hites <rhites@waynesvillenc.gov>
To: 'Monroe Miller'

Acknowledged.

[**Editor's Note:** Spelled wrong.]

Subject: Re: Request for Public Information - Dogwood Trust. #3
Date: Mon, 27 Sep 2021 15:18:50 -0400
From: Monroe Miller
To: Rob Hites <rhites@waynesvillenc.gov>
CC: Jesse Fowler <jfowler@waynesvillenc.gov>, Amy Murphy-Nugen <abmurphynugen@wcu.edu>, Elizabeth Teague <eteague@waynesvillenc.gov>, Martha Bradley <martha@sosharpe.com>

Thank you.

[**Editor's Note:** Since then, Rob Hites has gone dark. (Frowny face).]



Eof.