

Veterans service officer files harassment complaint

BY BRIAN WILSON
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A Taylor County department head has filed a formal harassment complaint against the chairman of her oversight committee objecting to him stopping into her office and wanting appointments to be made via email and phone calls ahead of time.

At 9:15 a.m. on April 8, county veterans service officer Shellie Shaw met with Sheriff Larry Woebbeking, "in reference to concerns they had about an unwanted, disorderly person."

According to Woebbeking's report, Shaw and benefit specialist Nikki Sherman had concerns about Lester Lewis.

According to Woebbeking's report, "They stated they do not like the fact he comes and goes as he pleases without making appointments." They specifically referenced an incident that occurred on April 7 and said that prior to those meetings Lewis had stopped into the office about seven times and that during those visits they had no issues with his demeanor.

"Specifically, [on April 7] they felt his conduct was inappropriate. They informed me he came into the Veteran's Administrative Office and went into Shellie Shaw's office. Shellie felt he was verbally aggressive and confrontational about the subject matter they were discussing. She stated she felt he was aggressive in nature, made her feel uncomfortable and his actions were not acceptable. Nikki Sherman, who works in the front office adjoining Shellie's office, stated she was with a client, a veteran, at the time and she felt Lester Lewis also made him feel uncomfortable with the argumentative nature of his conversation with Shellie," Woebbeking stated in the report.

He said that Sherman echoed Shaw's concerns. Woebbeking asked if there was any type of physical confrontation or if she felt for her safety in any way.

"She stated no, there was no physical confrontation

or threat of physical confrontational. However, she was very concerned with his conduct and thought he was very aggressive in nature and verbally argumentative and she did not appreciate the contact, nor did she feel it was acceptable. She further informed me she had contacted her own attorney and will be seeking a restraining order against Lester Lewis," Woebbeking stated.

"I informed Shellie that Lester is the Chairman of her committee and he will likely want to be able to come and go in her office and speak with her about issues related to her office. She stated she feels, it is unacceptable for Lester Lewis to randomly come in without an appointment, as she prefers appointments to be made first by email notification and confirmation and phone reservations secondary. She felt it was not acceptable for him to randomly come in," Woebbeking stated.

Under Taylor County's committee structure, each major department has an oversight committee. These committees review operations of departments and the chair of those committees is typically the point person when it comes to addressing issues with the department heads. Lewis is also the chairman of the law enforcement and emergency services committee which oversees the sheriff's department operations. However, unlike Shaw who is a county employee, the sheriff is elected and ultimately answers directly to the voters.

"In discussing this matter with Shellie, I did not see a violation of law," Woebbeking stated.

He noted she had indicated the seven prior visits were cordial events even though she would rather an appointment to have been made.

"I informed Shellie I did not see this to be a law enforcement issue at this time and if there had been it would be a conflict for the Sheriff's Office to investigate. Shellie agreed and stated at this time she was just making me aware of the issues and she would be working with her private attorney further," Woebbeking stated. The report indicated that Shaw wanted this information on file in case it became an ongoing issue.

Woebbeking told Shaw he would be contacting Lester Lewis to inform him of her concerns and that he would document her concerns in his report.

Following the conversation with Shaw, Woebbeking called Lewis to inform him of Shaw and Sherman's concerns.

"Lester Lewis' version of the conversation that occurred on the 7th was different than Shellie's and Nikki's. He felt it was cordial and stated no one was agitated, verbally aggressive, or raising their voices. He indicated he thought he was very polite when he entered the office and had asked Nikki's permission to speak with Shellie and Nikki granted it," Woebbeking stated.

"Lester further stated he had asked Nikki if he should leave and come back since she was with a client, but Nikki stated no, it was fine. Lester also indicated the client with Nikki had also stated it was fine because he was done and leaving. Lester further informed me when he got to Shellie's office door it was open and he knocked, Shellie asked him to wait a moment because she had sensitive information on her computer screen. Lester states he waited by her office door while she closed down that information then she told him to come in and they had a conversation," Woebbeking stated.

"Lester did not agree with Shellie's and Nikki's version of his visit," Woebbeking stated.

"I relayed to Lester that Shellie wanted appointments to be made via email first, phone secondary, and she did not want him to randomly come in unannounced. Shellie does not think it is acceptable for Lester to come to speak with her without confirmed appointments," Woebbeking stated.

"Lester indicated he did not feel that was acceptable as he is the Chairman of her Committee and will need to come to her office to discuss issues as needed. He did indicate he would avoid contact with her until the next Veteran's [Service] Committee meeting where he would further address Shellie's concerns," Woebbeking stated.

Taylor County board recognizes recent retirees with plaques



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County board chairman Jim Metz (right) presented Patricia Krug (left) a plaque expressing appreciation on her 32 years of employment as Taylor County public health director. Krug noted that while the past two years were rough, overall she enjoyed her time working with Taylor County. Also recognized but unable to attend the meeting was Liza Daleiden who had 32 years of work with Human Services in the county the past two years as director. She retired on February 1.



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County board chairman Jim Metz (right) presented Ingrid Purvis (left) a plaque expressing appreciation on her 33 years of employment with Taylor County both in the health department and since 2019 as jail nurse.



BRIAN WILSON/THE STAR NEWS

County board chairman Jim Metz (right) presented Arthur Klimpke (left) a plaque expressing appreciation on his 11 years of employment with Taylor County as a custodian.



BRIAN WILSON/THE STAR NEWS

County board chairman Jim Metz (right) presented Kelley Isola (left) a plaque expressing appreciation on her 29 years of employment with Taylor County both in the county jail and with human services. She retired on January 3.



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At Tuesday's meeting of the Taylor County Board, County board chairman Jim Metz (right) presented Laura Holmes (left) a plaque expressing appreciation on her 14 years of employment with Taylor County Human Services. She retired on February 4.