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NEWS

Tue. Sep 8, 2009

**Milton police chief back on the job**

*Phillips says mayor, town manager should resign*

By Kevin Spence

Milton Town Council has reinstated suspended Milton Police Chief William Phillips.

During the fifth day of a public hearing that began in July, council voted 3-1 to immediately reinstate Phillips.

Milton Town Council members Mary Hudson, Noble Prettyman and Vice Mayor Leah Betts on Thursday, Sept. 3, voted to reinstate Phillips. Dissenting Councilwoman Deanna Duby, who also served as the hearing officer, commented on her vote, saying her decision was well thought out, yet difficult to make. "I'm in the minority. My vote will not determine Chief Phillips' fate," she said.

Duby also said contrary to assertions heard in town, she was not a puppet of Milton Mayor Don Post. She also said she has nothing against Phillips, but that she has serious concerns about his leadership.

Councilwoman Joanie Martin-Brown abstained from the vote after her attempt to amend the wording of the decision failed. Martin-Brown wanted the decision to state the chief would be "reinstated with prejudice" to indicate council concern with Phillips' alleged mismanagement of the police department.

"I now hope, that with the chief's reinstatement, the many problems that surfaced in this matter will be quickly corrected by the police chief ...." Martin-Brown later wrote in a letter to the Cape Gazette.

Milton Mayor Don Post removed himself from the decision-making process because he testified on behalf of the Town of Milton during the hearing. Councilwoman Ronda Abraham also removed herself from the vote, saying her busy work schedule had prevented her from taking part in the hearings.

Councilwoman Leah Betts apologized to town residents for the investigation and its cost to taxpayers, which Councilwoman Mary Hudson estimated at \$100,000. Hudson, who made the motion to reinstate Phillips immediately, said in the future all lawsuits should be voted on by the entire council to keep council more fully involved. Councilman Noble Prettyman, who seconded the motion to reinstate the chief, said not enough conclusive evidence was presented to provide just cause to remove Phillips.

Post put Phillips on paid administrative leave March 10. The town eventually leveled 17 allegations against Phillips, which became the basis of the prolonged public hearing.

Following his reinstatement, Phillips and his attorney, John LaRosa, held a press conference.

Phillips said voters should remove Post and town Manager George Dickerson from office and called for the two men to resign immediately.

He and LaRosa also thanked residents and council for their support. LaRosa said council's decision was fair and would send a message to corrupt town officials.

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