

August 2, 2010

Lakeway Chief of Police
Todd A. Radford
104 Cross Creek
Lakeway, Texas 78734-4465

Via e-mail – toddradford@lakeway-tx.gov

Re: Incident at the Lakeway Conference Center – San Marcos Room

Dear Chief Radford:

Principles only mean something when you stick by them when they are inconvenient, and right now my principles are decidedly inconvenient. I have never been so at odds with myself about the above referenced. The bottom line is, an incident did occur on your jurisdiction that involved me and another council member, and after 14 days of internal grief regarding what to do, I believe it is best to report the incident to the proper authority.

My position is a political one; if I don't file a report, I then appear weak to one side of my council and am considered a pushover, and political instability takes place, and if I do file, the other side of the council takes this as a threat and political instability takes place. Nevertheless, I believe the process has rights. I therefore submit the accompanying statement as my account of events regarding the above referenced.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

John D. Cowman

Original to follow in the U.S. Mail

S T A T E M E N T

TO: Lakeway Police Department

FROM: John D. Cowman, Mayor, City of Leander

DATE: August 2, 2010

RE: Incident at Lakeway Inn on July 18, 2010

Parties: Leander City Councilperson David Seibold (Witness) 512-826-0105
Leander City Councilperson Andrea Navarette (Witness) 512-563-8202
Leander City Councilperson Kirsten Lynch (Witness) 512-791-6542
Leander City Councilperson Carl Wake (Witness) 512-983-6533
Leander City Councilperson Michell Cantwell (not present during incident)
512-630-3661
Leander City Manager Anthony "Biff" Johnson (Witness) 512-709-5911
Leander Mayor John D. Cowman (Witness and Involved) 512-789-5000
Leander Mayor Pro Tem Chris Fielder (Witness and Involved) 512-964-5143

On Sunday July 18, 2010 the Leander City Council was wrapping up a two-day retreat at the Lakeway Inn and Conference Center. At approximately 12:45 p.m., Chris Feilder was in an elevated discussion with Andrea Navarette. Ms. Navarette was crying. I asked Mr. Fielder to temper his tone with Ms. Navarette. Mr. Feilder then said "God Damn it you need to shut the f_ _ _ up and you need to start respecting me." I again asked him to stop, and he told me if I said another word, he was going to "come across the table and kick my ass." I again told him to stop. Mr. Feilder left his seat and rapidly strode around Councilperson Lynch and City Manager Biff Johnson until he reached me. I was sitting in my chair and followed him by swiveling in my chair as he moved. Mr. Feilder, now standing right in front of me reached down and began to choke me with his hands briefly cutting off my air supply. My chair tilted backward. Mr. Johnson, Mr. Wake and Mr. Seibold pulled Mr. Feilder away and off of me. Mr. Feilder then grabbed my shirt ripping three or four buttons off. While Johnson, Seibold and Wake were trying to separate Feilder and me, I pushed Mr. Feilder in the chest to get him off of me. As Feilder was pulled away, he grazed my right cheek, knocking off my glasses in the process. In the altercation Mr. Wake trying to subdue Mr. Feilder skinned his knee on the carpet. While this was occurring, Ms. Navarette activated her cell phone video camera and videoed the incident from where Mr. Feilder was parallel to Mr. Johnson (I have not seen the video but was told this by Ms. Navarette). My glasses were knocked off and I asked everyone to please stop moving so I could find them. Mr. Feilder continued his aggressive

stance toward me. I again told him to stop and told him if he did not I would take him down. The altercation then concluded by Mr. Seibold I believe escorting Mr. Feilder out of the room.

I futher sayeth not

John D. Cowman

Lakeway Police Department

Offense / Incident Report

GENERAL OFFENSE INFORMATION

Report Type: Cumulative Report

Case #	10-01888	Location	101 LAKEWAY DRIVE
File #			LAKEWAY TEXAS 78734
Offense	ASSAULT		
Incident Status	EXCEPTIONALLY CLEARED	From Date/Time	08/03/2010 00:00
Reporting Officer	DAVIS, D.	To Date/Time	08/03/2010 00:00
Initial Rep. Date	08/03/2010 10:17	Report Date	08/03/2010 10:17

COMPLAINANT

Name Cowman, John D				
Address				Phone [REDACTED]
Race	W	Ethnic	Sex	DOB
Height		Weight	Hair	Eyes
S.S.N.	__-__-__	DL & St.	JRN#	

SUBJECT(S)

Name Cowman, John D				
Address				Phone [REDACTED]
Race	W	Ethnic	N	Sex M
Height		Weight		Hair
S.S.N.	__-__-__	DL & St.		JRN#
Sub. Type	COMPLAINANT	Arrest ID		Citation #
Notes				

INVESTIGATOR

Name	DAVIS, D.	Assigned Date	08/03/2010
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Entered By REID, B. _____

Officer DAVIS, D. _____

Supervisor _____

**Lakeway Police Department
Incident # 10-01888**

DAVIS, D.

On July 29, 2010 at 4:00 PM John D. Cowman; Mayor of the City of Leander, Williamson County Texas, Todd Radford; Chief of Police City of Lakeway, Captain David Crowder and myself met in Chief Radford's office for the purpose of discussing an incident that had occurred on July 18, 2010 in the San Marcos Room at the Lakeway Inn and Spa 101 Lakeway Drive Lakeway Texas.

Mr. Cowman related that while on retreat at the Inn and Spa at approximately 12:45 PM the Council of the City of Leander were returning from a break in a posted official meeting when he(Cowman) noticed Mayor Pro Tem Chris Fielder and Councilperson Andrea Navarette were engaged in a heated verbal exchange. Cowman indicated he told Fielder to "temper" his tone, a request to which Fielder responded " *God [REDACTED] it you need to shut the [REDACTED] up and you need to start respecting me*". Cowman indicated he then demanded that Fielder "stop" to which Fielder responded by saying "*if you say another word I'll come across the table and kick your [REDACTED]*" and by leaving his seat, rapidly approaching Cowman around the end of the table and choking Cowman with his hands. Cowman indicated that his air supply was briefly shut off, his eye glasses were knocked off his face and to the floor, and his shirt was ripped open to the third or fourth button. Cowman indicated that Councilpersons David Seibold and Carl Wake along with Leander City Manager Anthony Johnson attempted to physically subdue Fielder and in the process Wake sustained an abrasion on his knee.

The alleged assault ended at that point and Seibold escorted Fielder from the meeting room.

Cowman was unable to identify the specific topic of conversation between Fielder and Navarette just prior to the alleged assault but he did say he believed it to be "political".

Cowman further indicated he was being pressured by Councilperson Kirsten Lynch whom had threatened to "go to the media" with story of the alleged assault if Cowman failed to report the incident to the Lakeway Police Department. Cowman indicated that his reluctance to amke an official report was in an effort to protect the City of Leander's

newly improved "Bond Rating".

At a point during the meeting being reported here; Todd Radford had a telephone conversation with Lynch, see his supplement regarding the details of that conversation.

On August 2, 2010, Todd Radford received a letter (via email) that tended to indicate Cowman's intent to report the aforementioned incident for the purpose of a criminal investigation. A telephone conversation ensued between Cowman and Radford and it was confirmed a criminal investigation was Cowman's intent. (Radford's supplement for additional detail)

On August 3, 2010 at 10:00 AM Todd Radford, Captain David Crowder, and I met to initiate the criminal investigation of the aforementioned incident and to assign Detective David Davis to conduct the investigation.

Incident # 10-01888 (1)

DAVIS, D.

On 08/05/10 I attempted to make phone contact with the victim, John Cowman. I left a message on phone # [REDACTED] requesting a return call. I also left phone messages with the below witnesses,

Andrea Navarette [REDACTED]

David Seibold [REDACTED]

Kirsten Lynch [REDACTED]

Carl Wake [REDACTED]

The victim John Cowman did return my call and we spoke at length. John Cowman is the current Mayor of The City of Leander. He and the Leander City Council were at the Lakeway Inn attending a Leander City Council work session on July 18th 2010. According to Cowman the council had just taken a break and the following councilpersons were still in the meeting room:

David Seibold / Councilperson

Andrea Navarette / Councilperson

Kristen Lynch / Councilperson

Carl Wake / Councilperson

Biff Johnson / City Manager

Chris Fielder / Mayor Pro Tem

John Cowman / Mayor

Mayor Cowman stated that during the break he noticed that Mayor Pro Tem Fielder and Councilperson Andrea Navarette were in what he described as an "elevated discussion". He also stated that Navarette appeared to be upset and crying. Cowman asked Fielder to temper his tone with Navarette. Fielder responded by telling Cowman to "shut the [REDACTED] up and you need to start respecting me". Cowman responded by asking Fielder to stop. Cowman states that Fielder replied "if you say another word I am going to come across this table and kick you [REDACTED]" Cowman then told Fielder to stop. Fielder promptly carried out his threat by approaching Cowman and "grabbing him by the throat and choking him. City Manager Johnson, Councilpersons Wake and Seibold pulled Fielder off Cowman. Cowman admits to pushing Fielder in the chest in an effort to separate himself from Fielder's grasp.

During the altercation Cowman's shirt was torn and his glasses knocked off. Cowman did not allege pain, only that he could not breath for a brief moment due to Fielder's grasp. Councilperson Wake suffered mild abrasions to his knees from falling to the carpeted floor during the altercation.

I learned from Mayor Cowman that Councilperson Navarette had videoed the incident on her cell phone. I have not seen this video nor has Navarette confirmed the existance of such a video.

I have spoken to all parties involved with the exception of the suspect Chris Fielder.

All of the witnesses have relayed very similar accounts of the incident.

Andrea Navarette confirmed that she had videoed part of the incident with her cell phone. Due to the fact that Mayor Cowman does not want to pursue criminal charges against Fielder I did not request a copy of the video from Navarette.

During my conversation with Kristen Lynch she stated that she was no longer comfortable around Chris Fielder fearing that he would in the future react in a similar fashion.

Mayor Cowman relayed to me that Fielder has issued a letter of apology to all councilpersons expressing his remorse concerning his behavior.

Mayor Cowman does not wish to pursue criminal charges against Chris Fielder for the

Case No: 10-01888

assault perpetrated against him.

Case closed.

Sunday, July 18, 2010, 12:53 PM

Chris Feilder: You want to come out and talk to me?

Sunday, July 18, 2010, 2:24 PM

John Cowman: you are my friend

Sunday, July 18, 2010, 3:58 PM

Chris Feilder: We will see, I will be resigning from council

Sunday, July 18, 2010, 4:31 PM

Chris Feilder: Who are you going to tell about this

Sunday, July 18, 2010, 4:43 PM

John Cowman: afterwards chris I defended you and will continue to defend you

Sunday, July 18, 2010, 4:45 PM

John Cowman: This is a private matter

Sunday, July 18, 2010, 4:47 PM

Chris Feilder: We will see

Sunday, July 18, 2010, 7:55 PM

Chris Feilder: I apologize for my actions and I was in the wrong I hope you understand

Wednesday, July 21, 2010, 8:51 PM

Chris Feilder: I have tried to call you 4 times, can you call me please

Friday, July 30, 2010, 2:44 PM

Chris Feilder: Can you call me?

Friday July 30, 2010, 3:24 PM

Chris Feilder: Talked to Bradley, I am not up for reappointment to confirm, I also checked and the 3 years Vic was a board member we never appointed but one time

“Principles only mean something when you stand by them especially when they’re inconvenient.”

I look upon the events since our council retreat last month and have never come so close to grips with this quotation.

To all citizens of the City of Leander, it pains my soul to tell you that shame has infiltrated our sacred Leander City Council Chamber. Over the last 30 days, a certain member of your city’s political leadership has raised the stakes of hate for one another to a level where we can no longer separate the demagogue from the truth. Believe this: there are traitors among us. I am not talking about council members siding for or against one or another due to this event; I am talking about those who were loyal to our city, but traitors to the necessary end result. And that end result is due process. I am not free from blame either. Right from the start I should have gone to the proper authority and called for an investigation on what I can only describe as a heinous act occurring at our council retreat at the Lakeway Conference Center, but I did not. I was more concerned with the integrity of our city, how she would be perceived, specifically the city’s credit (bond) rating. Like the majority of council, I was prepared to look the other way, as my principles, which I hold so dear, were decidedly inconvenient.

Edmund Burke once said “all that is necessary for evil to triumph is that good men do nothing”.

Well, I did do something. And yes, I did struggle for 10 days seeking a solution. On Thursday, July 29, 2010, eleven days after the event I met with the Lakeway Police Chief and described the event but did not file a statement. I decided to wait through the weekend. On Monday, August 3, 2010, I notified the Lakeway Police and asked for an investigation on the conduct of a Leander Council Member. I did this because it was the proper thing to do, and as your Mayor, and on behalf of your city council, we must be beyond reproach and held to a higher standard. There must be transparency.

To all citizens of the City of Leander, I sincerely apologize for my inability to act more quickly on this situation, and my reluctance to come forward to inform you, for whom I work of this heinous act of one of your council representatives.

To the Leander City Council, hate and ego have no place residing in what we call our chamber of integrity. There is no weapon as powerful as the truth. As Mayor, I tender this letter of explanation and apology to the citizens of the City of Leander.

To the City of Leander Management and Staff, I apologize to you for putting you through 30 days of irresolution regarding this matter. My decision making vacillation sets a poor example and will not happen again.

To Mayor Pro Tem Christopher Fielder, your conduct was unbecoming of a gentleman, and a Leander City Councilperson. Of the Ten Ethical Principles that we learned from our school children and adopted as a council, I believe you violated nine of them. So I ask this three part question to you Sir, and that is, what do you have to say for yourself; what do you have to say to the citizens of Leander; and how do we, as a council proceed?

John D. Cowman, Mayor of Leander

NEWS / TOP STORIES

Scuffle between mayor, pro tem could lead to ethics review

Friday, August 13, 2010 | Special to the Ledger

The issue of a reported physical scuffle between the city's mayor and mayor pro tem looked to have ended this week, but a request for a City Council ethics review may prolong the matter.

The altercation, which happened during a two-day Council retreat in mid-July between Mayor John Cowman and Mayor Pro Tem Chris Fielder appeared to have ended with an apology offered and no charges filed after a police investigation.

Councilwoman Kirsten Lynch said Friday she wanted to pursue an ethics investigation after police closed its investigation.

"The city charter allows for the Council to be the judge for its own members," she said, adding that even "if it comes out that nothing needs to be done, Barney (Knight, city attorney) will guide us and tell us what our options are."

The incident occurred during the Council's annual retreat July 17-18 at the Lakeway Resort & Spa. The retreats, which are open to the public, include the Council receiving departmental updates and a review of the city budget by city staff.

The incident occurred about the time of an agenda item which worked to foster good relations within the Council and city staff. During a recess,

Cowman said he attempted to intervene in an exchange between Fielder and Councilwoman Andrea Navarrette.

"I was trying to temper a mood, and I was unsuccessful," Cowman said.

According to several accounts of the incident, Fielder then told Cowman to stop. Cowman did not stop, he said, and then Fielder came at him. City Manager Anthony "Biff" Johnson said the situation happened quickly.

"It was clearly a disagreement that got very emotional and turned into a situation," he said. "Chris grabbed John. We grabbed Chris, then John grabbed Chris. Then we grabbed John, and it was over."

No injuries were reported, and no one called police at the time.

Cowman contacted Lakeway police on July 29 after talking with Lynch, who said she would resign if the Council would not take any action on the issue.

"I can't stand a cover-up," she said. "Something needs to be done."

Lakeway Police Chief Todd Radford said Cowman authorized the investigation the following week, which police began Aug. 3.

On Thursday, Radford said police closed the case with no charges filed.

"There was enough evidence to support a Class C misdemeanor assault by contact," Radford said. "The victim did not want to file charges."

A Class C misdemeanor could result in a fine of up to \$500.

Cowman said he decided not to move ahead with charges.

"I have dropped the charges. It is time to begin the healing," he said.

Fielder, who was never contacted by Lakeway police, apologized in writing to the Council for "his inappropriate behavior during a heated argument."

In his letter, Fielder said he had "acted in a way that was embarrassing, inappropriate and uncharacteristic of me as a person, a Council Member and Pro Tem of the City."

In the month since the incident, city leaders appeared to continue business as usual.

City Council meetings continued with all members present. Cowman and Fielder attended other meetings on city business.

As far as the Council's ability to maintain a working relationship, Johnson said, "In 30 years, I've seen far worse. And I've seen people who've had disagreements get back together and work closely together."

On Friday, Cowman said he was ready to move on. As far as his relationship with Fielder, he said they would continue to work together.

"It will strictly be a professional one. I will stay outside of arm's length from him," he said.

Fielder said he and Cowman would continue working together. They have already attended at least three meetings together for city business.

"Nobody fights closer than brothers," he said.

On Friday, Lynch said she was not ready to dismiss the matter.

"I am passionate and angry that no one else is coming forth and doing anything about it," she said.

It would take a super majority of the Council for any ethics violation to be decided.

Timeline

July 18 – argument during break at City Council retreat escalates between Cowman and Fielder. Johnson, Wake and Siebold separated the men. No police called.

July 29 – Cowman contacts Lakeway police, makes statement.

July 30 – Fielder writes letter of apology over incident.

Aug. 2 – Fielder's letter included in each councilmember's packets for the Aug. 5 Council meeting.

Aug. 3 – Cowman contacts Lakeway police and authorizes investigation.

Aug. 12 – Lakeway police find evidence for Class C misdemeanor, Assault by Contact. Investigation closed when Cowman said he would not pursue charges.

Aug. 13 – Councilwoman Kirsten Lynch requests item to be added to upcoming City Council agenda for an ethics review

Leander mayor says council member tried to choke him

John Cowman filed report but didn't pursue charges against Chris Fielder, who admits flareup but denies assault.



ENLARGE PHOTO

Chris Fielder



John Cowman

By **Miguel Liscano**

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Leander Mayor John Cowman says Council Member Chris Fielder choked him during a July budget retreat at a resort in Lakeway. Cowman reported an assault to Lakeway police but later told investigators not to pursue charges. On Aug. 3, police closed the case.

Fielder says he grabbed the mayor's collar but that he did not assault Cowman. Both men said Friday they have since spoken with each other and made amends.

"I was not hurt. Maybe my pride, but no physical damage," Cowman said.

"Nobody fights harder than two brothers," Fielder said.

The incident took place at a July 18 meeting at the Lakeway Inn and Spa where the council was meeting to discuss next year's nearly \$20 million proposed budget, expected to be adopted next month.

About 12:45 p.m., during a break, Cowman said he noticed Fielder arguing with fellow Council Member Andrea Navarrette.

Cowman said he asked Fielder to calm down, when Fielder started to curse at him and then grabbed his throat. Cowman said his glasses were knocked off, his shirt was torn during the scuffle and he briefly couldn't breathe.

Cowman said he pushed Fielder back and that other council members pulled Fielder off him, leading him outside.

"I didn't realize the severity of the situation, and the situation enveloped me rapidly," Cowman said.

Fielder said he was having a discussion with Navarrette, when Cowman intervened. Fielder would not say what he and Navarrette were discussing but said it did not deal with the city budget.

He said he and Cowman exchanged words that led him to move toward Cowman.

Even though there was contact, Fielder said, he did not try to choke Cowman.

"There was no assault," Fielder said. "I did grab at his collar, and I believe that's how his shirt got ripped."

Fielder said his shirt was ripped as well.

Shortly after the incident, Fielder said he apologized to council members individually for how the situation escalated. He also wrote an apology.

"Yes, it got heated," Fielder said on Friday . "I'm very sorry it ever happened."

Nearly two weeks after the incident, Cowman said he went to police to provide a statement on the incident so it would be on record.

Council Member Michell Cantwell , who was out of the room at the time of the incident, called it unusual. Fielder "has never lost his cool, ever," Cantwell said.

But at least one council member, Kirsten Lynch , says she has filed an ethics complaint against Fielder over the incident.

"I'm terrified of him," Lynch said. "I do not know when his temper will snap again."

Other council members, including Navarrette, could not be reached for comment Friday.

mliscano@statesman.com; 246-1150

Don't they have real council chambers? Who picked up the tab for the resort? Sounds like the good folk in Leander need to throw all these yahoos out... You just can't make

stuff up this good.

Sounds like a 3 Stooges movie to me.



Who misses the funny papers with this kind of entertainment?

Look like the jackass parade is now spread from Austin to Leander. Pathetic. They can file all the reports they want, make all of the apologies they want, and do all the explaining they want, it still pathetic. We really need to start expecting more from our elected officials.

I don't have a problem with elected bodies going away for retreat sessions, as long as the prices are reasonable. Not knowing what this one cost the city of Leander, I can't comment on that. But these groups have the right to step away occasionally. The assault, of course, is a different matter, and the whole situation sounds rather unfortunate. I'll be interested to see if the council wants to elect a different mayor pro tem at their next meeting.

A Budget Retreat in Lakeway? Isn't that an oxymoron?

If they were there on business trying to decide on how to cut unnecessary expenses and budget the money maybe they should start by working on the budget in the Leander City Counsel Building and not a tax paid getaway at an expensive resort. I'm sure the taxpayers of Leander paid their bar tabs that fueled this little fracas as well.

If the mayor was versed in the manly art of kung fu he could have slapped poop out of the bullyboy. The moral is don't mix in some one else's business unless you can follow through with the consequences whatever they may be.

I think Greg is right- Fielder should resign. The quote you attribute to him is absurd. We didn't elect these people to behave like squabbling siblings. Grow up! If Cowman is at fault also, then he should also resign. You really need to read the coverage on this story in the Hill Country News as well- with links to the police report. Every eyewitness states that Cowman was being choked. If that is true, then anyone has a right to defend themselves against that kind of assault. What happened to the police filing charges when it is clear an assault has occurred.

I hope the Statesman will stay on this story. Nickolas is also correct- what were they

doing at Lakeway Spa for a budget meeting? And, as the HCN reports- why wasn't this reported to the media for over 3 weeks.

Lakeway isn't an ordinary spa and resort, it's super expensive! Meeting at such a place to discuss the city budget probably violates the Texas Open Meetings Act. Was the press invited and transportation provided to for residents of the Leander who provide the tax money the city council was deciding how to spend?

Fielder's a stick of dynamite, could go postal. John Cowman's a pretty good 'ol boy, easy-going, pretty good mayor-politico, been good for Leander. He'll protect himself from here on. Count on it.



WHA??? What happened to a slap in the face and a challenge to a duel?

Why didn't they take it outside? It was HIGH NOON... Just sayin'!



The Leander city council had to go to a resort and spa to discuss the budget? Seriously? How about this: save some taxpayer money by doing your job at the office instead.

So this guy Fielder "tried" to choke a fellow council member? Just like a politician to not follow through. Maybe he was too intoxicated from the open bar at the resort and spa.

"I did grab at his collar, and I believe that's how his shirt got ripped."

Fielder said his shirt was ripped as well.

THEY JUST DON'T MAKE SHIRTS LIKE THEY USED TO !!!

LOL I've seen a few politicians in my life I would liked to have choked for a few seconds. For all you self righteous folks out there that see me as barbaric, I have never attacked a politician but, the thought does make me smile.

I liked it better when Leander didn't have a Mayor and the only budget that needed discussing concerned the school which had a pretty good football team but no multi-million dollar stadium.

A palm-heel strike delivered with force under the chin should break a collar grabber of the habit.

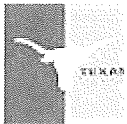


WE NEED MORE of this!

But at least one council member, Kirsten Lynch, says she has filed an ethics complaint against Fielder over the incident. WHAT A CROCK!

"I'm terrified of him," Lynch said. "I do not know when his temper will snap again." WHY DON'T YOU RESIGN?

Welcome to the real world. People do get mad and react, some people need not to try and run everything.



Score: 2

Both of these idiots laid hands on each other and both should resign immediately. We have to expect our elected leaders to behave themselves and not act like children.

Leander City Council retreat...assault or 'tussle?'

Police investigating quarrel between mayor pro tem and mayor

- **Story**
- **Comments (7)**
- **Image**

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From left, Mayor John Cowman and Mayor Pro Tem Chris Fielder. ap

Related Collections

 See the completed police report

Lakeway Police have closed the file on a reported assault at the Leander City Council budget retreat

Best Western Cedar Inn

(512) 259-7300



- Complimentary Breakfast
- Pool
- High Speed Internet
- Fitness Center

425 E. Whitestone Blvd.
Cedar Park, TX 78613

Posted: Wednesday, August 11, 2010 12:00 am | Updated: 1:51 pm, Fri Aug 13, 2010.

Johnny Johnson editor@hillcountrynews.com | 7 comments

LEANDER — Mayor Pro Tem Chris Fielder claims that the apology he wrote to other council members was for a simple argument, and not for assaulting Mayor John Cowman at the council's July budget retreat at Lakeway Spa and Resort.

"There was no assault in any way, shape or form," Fielder said. "There were no police called. There was no reason for police to be called — nothing illegal. I haven't been contacted by police and I'm unaware that there is any investigation going on at all."

But Lakeway police say they are investigating an incident that happened during the budget retreat.

"I can tell you that at this point it is an open investigation, Lakeway Police Manager Benjamin Reid said. "And we are investigating the possibility of an assault and interference with a public meeting."

Earlier in the week, Reid said several people still needed to be interviewed, but that the incident in question happened about noon, in the San Marcos meeting room of the resort.

Mayor John Cowman, said he had no comment on the matter, because he did not want to interfere with an official police investigation.

City Manager Biff Johnson admitted there was a heated disagreement between Cowman and Fielder, with words that shouldn't have been used, but that there were no punches thrown.

"There was physical contact, but it wasn't really in a brutal way," Johnson said. "It was more of a tussle. Nobody was hurt. Nobody went to the doctor. There were no bruises or black eyes.

Technically, Johnson said, police could probably pursue assault by contact if they so chose, but he said it was his understanding they were not moving forward with charges and that he personally thinks it was a sixth-grade mentality argument that was blown out of proportion.

"I've been doing this so long, I've seen council people actually get in a fight," Johnson said. "That's not what this was. This was more of a grab and say 'you better listen to me you blankety blank.'"

Johnson said he and other council members had to pull Fielder off the mayor, but after they separated the two, they had to pull on the Cowman to keep him from retaliating.

Councilwoman Andrea Navarette, who witnessed the incident said "it was a very unfortunate event, and I hope the city can move past it"

Fielder, who serves as a board member on the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center, admits he was frustrated and did make contact but he doesn't consider what happened to be assault.

"There was just a lot of built-up frustration over what the mayor has done," he said. "I think if there was going to be any charges, they would have already done something."

- Let me begin by saying that this is not the kind of representation that I chose for my city, and I am embarrassed that this wonderful city has drawn this type of negative publicity. A grown man, supposedly a professional, physically attacking another. Not to mention this man is a child advocate for abused children in Williamson County and he can't even control his temper, what kind of message is that sending? At the very least Fielder should be stripped of his Mayor Pro Tem status and hopefully in the next election people will wake up and vote this man out. I am also disappointed in the fact that Biff Johnson tried to smooth things over and claim this was "...more of a grab and say 'you better listen to me you blankety blank.'" (see follow-up article, there was more to it than we were led to believe).

And to you Watchdog, no matter what Cowman may have said, that does not give Fielder the right to physically attack him. There is no justifying Fielder's actions in this one. If you read the related article, you will see that Fielder caused a grown woman to cry and then attacked Cowman for defending her, is that really the type of person you want representing this community?

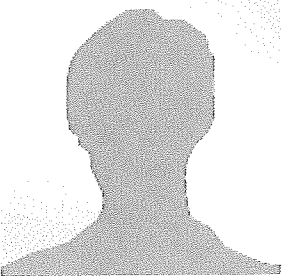
It is time for this city to shed the small town, "Leanderthal" reputation, and this type of behavior will only hinder our growth.

Violence has no place in our community!

- Log In to report.
- Link

[read more \(about 3 more lines\)](#)

- ***abcdefg posted at 12:19 pm on Sat, Aug 14, 2010.***



Posts: 1

budget "retreat"?

- [Log In to report.](#)
- [Link](#)

- ***watchdog posted at 12:38 am on Sat, Aug 14, 2010.***



Posts: 108

I'm sorry Debbie Lee but for you to say that John Cowman is the most "nonconfrontational" man you know, you either do not know many men or do not know Cowman very well at all. I really had to laugh at that one. It only takes reading the paper or watching the news to know that isn't true, or perhaps talking to a neighbor or two. I have had my run ins with John and my first encounter with John at a city council meeting was watching him attack Mark Brinson and totally get in this guys face outside the front of the Pat Bryson building. I thought I was going to have to go and get the police myself. Before you think that I hide behind a pseudo name, believe me, they (city council and most anyone who reads these blogs), know who I am. John had once told me of how he asked Doc Stiles to be on P & Z as to "shut him up" and get him to quit bashing city council. Not a breath later, John asked me to apply and he told me he would nominate me. I told John that I didn't want to "be shut up" and I would always speak my mind.

I know that John's Ultra Sincere-I really care about you-mellow dramatic way can be mesmerizing or hypnotizing to some, but really it isn't any different than the Emperor's New Clothes. Remember that story? It took one small child that wasn't baffled by all the bs given to him, and he plainly saw that the Emperor had on nothing but his underwear and in fact was not ornately clad in a fanciful robe.

All it takes is listening to the content and ignoring the schmooze. John has many times gone against council's directives (i.e. vying for spot on Capitol Metro Board AGAIN, the embarrassing Real Estate Transfer tax, just to name a couple) making council look the

fools and causing riffs along the way.

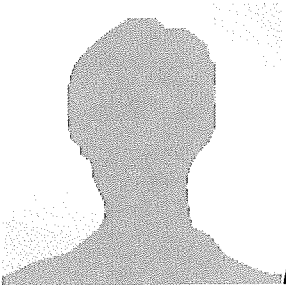
A meeting was held and only a few people were asked to give testimonials about their experience with John Cowman (not pleasant ones either). The meeting was to only last a short while, however, the entire audience with the exception of one or two people who had not personally met Cowman felt compelled to stand up and present their Cowman experience. Seems everybody had one and none of which were good. They had all been wronged by Cowman or felt they had been lied to. Now I understand you can't please everyone all the time, but there comes a point and time where the bad outweighs the good and changes need to be made

Will I say hello to John next time I see him? Probably. Does he know who wrote this? I'm most certain he does. Just as John and I seemingly coexist, so will council (maybe). It was a handpicked team they wanted and a handpicked team they got. I hope they make it work.

- Log In to report.
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[read more \(about 1/5 more lines\)](#)

- ***bunny posted at 7:13 pm on Thu, Aug 12, 2010.***

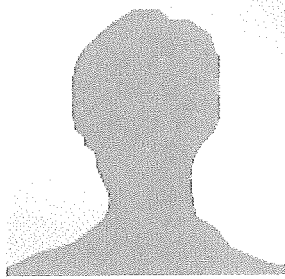


Posts: 8

I'd like to know what the issue was - obviously Cowman said/did something that sent Fielder over the edge. Many of us have been there with our Mayor. For all we know Fielder could have been defending the citizens in arguing against additional taxation or more infringements on businesses - which only hurts our ability to keep and attract jobs. Or possibly some conflict of interest our Mayor has with the BCRUA and CapMetro. Before we demand a resignation from Fielder I think we should demand to know what the issue was. I may 'tussle' with someone if they want to increase my taxes or if they have conflicts of interest in local real estate deals, etc.

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- ***Leander600 posted at 6:44 pm on Thu, Aug 12, 2010.***



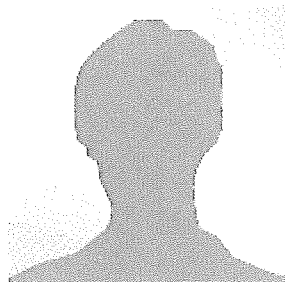
Posts: 1

I have been a resident of Leander for over 8 years and generally have supported our elected officials and their positions. Leander desires in so many ways to grow up as a city. We erect large signs for businesses years away from ever becoming reality. We speak about population reaching in the hundreds of thousands decades from now. We announce plans for a large-scale battery company right before an election, without confirmation they will get any funding necessary to actually build. We are just now beginning to build the roads necessary for business relocation and construction. To accomplish these lofty and reachable goals we must have credibility as a city. That credibility comes from professional leadership and accountability. Without it, everything else in the city suffers. I do not know what occurred that day in Lakeway. Perhaps we as citizens of Leander may never know. I applaud the editorial in the paper today. From my perspective, this is the toughest position I have seen the HCN take regarding an issue from our elected officials. Our representatives must stop this constant bickering that seems to occur every few months. Debate is the American way. Frustration when your passionate, is an admirable trait. We saw conflict with Mr. Perez. We saw conflict with new candidates running for office. We now see physical confrontation between our two top elected officials. If Leander wants to be a major player in Central Texas, we must stop the small-town mentality that seems to have a hold over some members of our council and city staff. I appreciate the hard work from many of our leaders. However, leadership comes with responsibility and consequence for making the wrong choice. It is my hope, we can learn from this unfortunate event.

- Log In to report.
- Link

[read more \(about 4 more lines\)](#)

- **jaunito posted at 4:29 pm on Thu, Aug 12, 2010.**

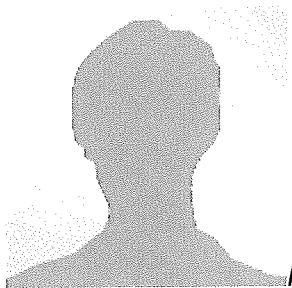


Posts: 1

I have spoken to a few of the council members and I think that this was more than a 6th grade type of tussle. Anyone who goes to a public meeting and grows angry enough to attack one of the other participants should not be allowed to continue the the position he or she has been elected to. I have been frustrated numerous times at meetings but I have yet to attack one of the other people at the meeting. If the frustration is that great he needs to let someone else take his seat on the council. It is my opinion that councilman Fielder should resign. His apology, just before he resigns, should be to the people who elected him as well as those who were at the meeting. I voted for councilman Fielder but I will not do so again and I will do my best to get everyone I know to elect someone else to take his place.

- [Log In to report.](#)
- [Link](#)

- ***Debbie Lee posted at 12:32 pm on Thu, Aug 12, 2010.***



Posts: 0

Mayor John Cowman is the most non-confrontational man I know. He is generally the peace maker in any argument. I suspect the mayor's attempts to prevent continued bullying by Mr. Fielder against another council member may have caused Mr. Fielder to go off the deep end. I don't care about an apology from the city or council members, but I find it very telling that the apology from Mr. Fielder didn't occur, until after charges were filed. I also don't see how Mr. Johnson could classify the altercation as a tussle when it alledgedly (I freely admit this is heresay on my part) took three grown men to get Mr. Fielder to stop choking Mayor Cowman. I am also interested in knowing if it is true that a council person took video, on their phone, of the incicent and why they haven't come forward with it. Mr. Fielder claims he was "taking the high road" when he apologized to the other council members. Personally, I think he should "man-up" and resign from the council for his reprehensible behavior.

LAKEWAY — The Lakeway Police Department has closed the investigation into a reported assault at a Leander City Council budget retreat after Mayor John Cowman decided to drop charges against Mayor Pro Tem Chris Fielder, according to a police report released late Thursday.

“Mayor Cowman does not wish to pursue criminal charges against Chris Fielder for the assault perpetrated against him,” Detective David Davis wrote in the report.

Cowman who began talking to police on July 29 — 11 days after the alleged incident — sent an e-mail to police on Aug. 2 that he wanted to officially report the incident for a criminal investigation.

Before detectives had a chance to interview Fielder however, Cowman decided to drop charges, the report said.

Cowman told police the assault occurred during a break from the budget meeting when he observed an “elevated discussion” between Fielder and Councilwoman Andrea Navarrette, in which the councilwoman appeared to be crying.

When Cowman asked Fielder to “temper his tone,” the mayor pro tem responded by telling Cowman to “shut the (expletive) up and you need to start respecting me,” the report said.

Fielder then grabbed Cowman by the throat and began to choke him, until City Manger Biff Johnson and two other councilmen “pulled Fielder off Cowman,” the report said.

Cowman said his air supply was cut off, his glasses were knocked off and his shirt was ripped open to the third or fourth button during the incident.

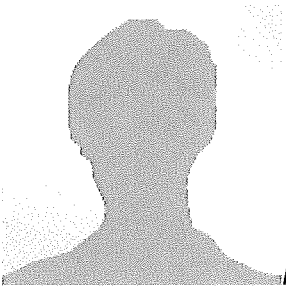
Four other council members present confirmed Cowman’s account, police said.

Navarrette told police that she had even videoed part of the assault on her cell phone, but police did not request the video due to the fact that Cowman dropped charges.

- The fact that these council "retreats" are open to the public is news to me. If that's the case then why are they held out of town on our tax dollars? Must be nice... I wonder... do they serve alcohol at these working retreats? So our tax dollars are being spent on out of town 'working' vacations, nice hotels, great food, probably great drinks. Wow, must be nice to be on the council... most of us didn't get a vacation this summer. I'm sure you've heard - we are in a recession!!

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- ***Pablo67 posted at 10:12 am on Sun, Aug 15, 2010.***



Posts: 2

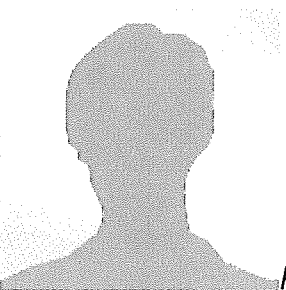
Causing a grown woman to cry and physically attacking the Mayor. Not what I want representing my community.

Fielder should be stripped of his Mayor Pro Tem status at the very least, if not completely removed from the council. This is definitely not a man I want to take a chance on running our city if Cowman steps down.

Violence has no place in Leander!

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- [Link](#)

- ***Just a thought posted at 9:24 am on Sun, Aug 15, 2010.***



Posts: 69

Would have been nice if they would have held their "retreat" in Leander.

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Council to decide Fielder's fate in executive session

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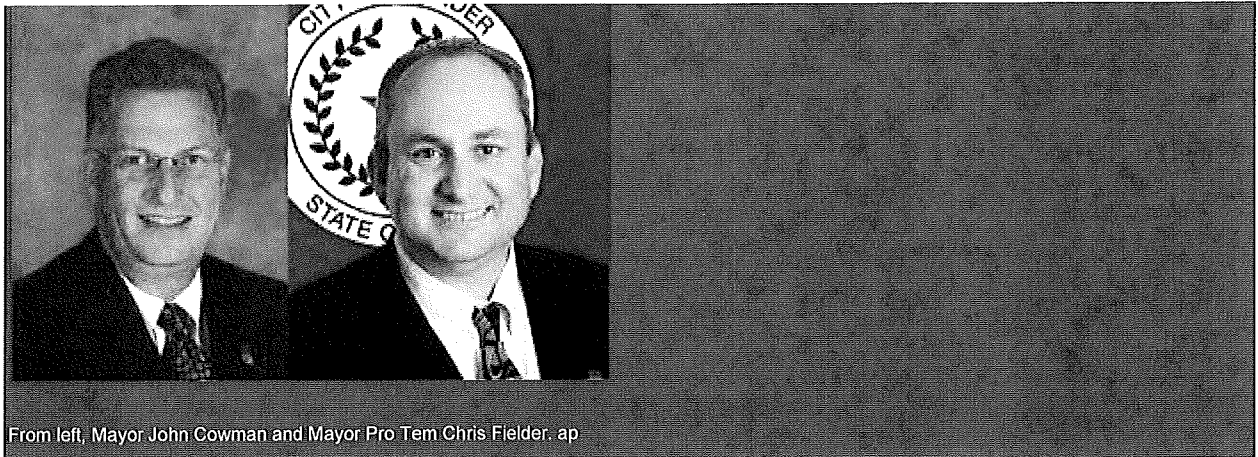
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From left, Mayor John Cowman and Mayor Pro Tem Chris Fielder. ap



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Posted: Tuesday, August 17, 2010 4:51 pm | Updated: 8:25 am, Wed Aug 18, 2010.

Johnny Johnson editor@hillcountrynews.com | 2 comments

LEANDER —The Leander City Council will meet in executive session at Thursday's regularly scheduled meeting to consider the evaluation, performance and actions of the Mayor Pro Tem.

Citizens are welcome to attend the regularly scheduled meeting, but discussion in executive session is not open to the public.

Pol. Adv. Paid for by John D. Cowman. Mailing Address: 1920 Holly Hill Drive, Leander, Texas 78741 (Tel. 512-789-5000).
John D. Cowman subscribes to the Texas "Code of Fair Campaign Practices" Act, TEC:[EC § 253-001-009] Texas Ethics Commission.

The agenda item comes at the request of Councilwoman Kirsten Lynch who formally requested an ethics investigation after Mayor John Cowman decided to drop a Class C misdemeanor assault charge against Mayor Pro Tem Chris Fielder.

Lynch asked for the agenda item to investigate Fielder's actions in a letter addressed to the city council last week

"Notwithstanding of the wonderful and progressive things that he has accomplished, Pro Tem Fielder chose violence and rage to get Mayor John Cowman to stop talking," Lynch wrote in the letter. "Violence is not an acceptable answer."

Lynch's request came last week after the Lakeway Police Department closed its criminal investigation into a reported assault at a Leander City Council budget retreat on July 18.

"Mayor Cowman does not wish to pursue criminal charges against Chris Fielder for the assault perpetrated against him," Lakeway Detective David Davis wrote in the report.

On July 30, Fielder penned a letter to council members issuing an apology to the council saying that he was "very frustrated and let my frustration escalate into a provoked altercation."

He went on to write that if "it were to ever happen that I was involved in another situation where I was the aggressor, I would immediately remove myself from council."

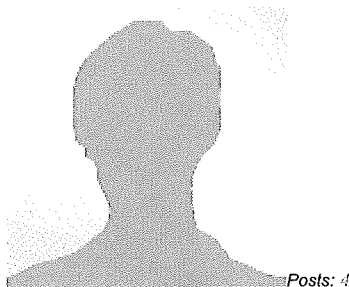
Lynch told police that she was no longer comfortable around Fielder, and that she feared he would react in a similar fashion in the future.

"Pro Tem Fielder's apology letter does not begin to describe the action he chose to take on that day," she wrote. "The actions he chose to take are not acceptable for a City Council Member, nor a Mayor Pro Tem, nor a representative of the City of Leander. And the City of Leander deserves better."

Lynch cites section 3.05 of the city charter that the council is "judge of its members," and she said it will take five of the seven members to take action against Fielder.

2 comments:

- **Pablo67** *posted at 8:04 am on Wed, Aug 18, 2010.*



I would like to start by stating that this is not an attack on the man, but an opinion of a politician and his actions.

Is this meeting Thursday a public meeting? I think we should all have a say in this. As far as the ethics investigation, I am all for it. Talk around the campfire (by Fielder himself) is that he has been chosen for Mayor Pro Tem a third time because it is the plan of Fielder and Cowman to have Cowman step down so Fielder can become Mayor without our consent. If this is true, it also shows Fielder's lack of sense in the fact that he was "biting the hand that was attempting to feed him". Which brings to light an indicator of Fielder's unpopularity. In the last election an individual ran against Fielder for the sole purpose of there being an alternative. This person had a one page website, posted no campaign signs, held no rallies, and still garnered nearly 30% of the vote. I do believe there should be an investigation into the actions of both Fielder and Cowman, not only in this recent incident, but in their plans I have discussed above.

Pol. Adv. Paid for by John D. Cowman. Mailing Address: 4920 Holly Hill Drive, Leander, Texas 78741 (Tel. 512-789-5000).
John D. Cowman subscribes to the Texas "Code of Fair Campaign Practices" Act, TEC:[EC § 258-004-009] Texas Ethics Commission.

In regards to Fielder's apology to the council (and where's the apology to the citizens of Leander), that was not an apology. He did not take responsibility for his actions, he states that it was a "provoked altercation". Obviously Fielder is still blaming others for his actions instead of standing up and admitting he was unethical, unlawful, and just plain unprofessional. Furthermore, stating that "if it were to ever happen that I was involved in another situation where I was the aggressor, I would immediately remove myself from council," only reinforces that he himself knows that it is only a matter of time before he loses his temper again. Does this city really need an individual such as this for an example to our surrounding communities? What about his duties as a child advocate, what kind of message is he sending out to the children of our community?

I agree with Lynch that Fielder's actions would create an uncomfortable situation within city council and I would add that it would have an influence on decision making if one were fearful of Fielder's reaction.

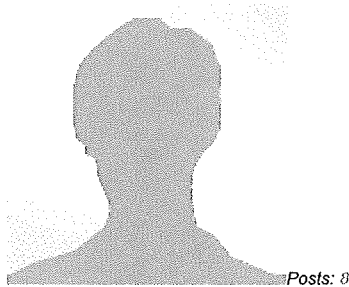
At the very least, and I do mean least, Fielder should be stripped of his unethically acquired title of Mayor Pro Tem, if not removed from the council altogether. If he stays, let the people decide in the next election if he continues to represent our fine city.

I for one would not vote for him.

- Log In to report.
- Link

[read more \(about 141 more lines\)](#)

- **Leander1994 posted at 7:45 pm on Tue, Aug 17, 2010.**



Ms Lynch better be careful regarding her statements before she thinks this through. Ask yourself , Why would the mayor drop the charges?. Is it because he is just a forgiving man? OR might it be that if Mr. Cowman DOES press charges, this case will go to court. In court, Mr Cowman will be required to take the stand under oath. Hmmmmmmmmm. What could happen under oath? I don't think Mr. Cowman wants you to know.