



***BROWARD COUNTY PBA
DAILY CLIPS***

November 30, 2016

MEDIA OUTLET: Sun Sentinel

HEADLINE: Hallandale Beach fires city attorney; London says city manager is next

BYLINE: Susannah Bryan

LINK: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/hallandale/fl-changes-city-hall-hallandale-20161129-story.html>

STORY: Vice Mayor Keith London has wanted to fire the city attorney for months.

He got his wish Tuesday night in a special meeting, just three weeks after a mud-slinging election that shifted the balance of power at City Hall.

City Attorney Lynn Whitfield knew it was coming. She read a tearful farewell speech, thanking Mayor Joy Cooper and Commissioner Anthony Sanders for their support and encouraging her staff to go on without her.

London also made a case for terminating City Manager Daniel Rosemond, who was not at the meeting but sent his personal attorney, who watched from the audience and later told the commission Rosemond was not willing to resign.

Commissioners agreed to have a special meeting at 6:30 p.m. Thursday to suspend Rosemond, a move required by the city charter before he can be fired.

London accused Whitfield of violating city policy by giving ex-Commissioner Bill Julian campaign advice — a conversation caught on a robocall recording earlier this year. London accused Rosemond of using a city credit card to buy airline tickets for his daughter and entering into a contract that exceeded his \$25,000 spending limit.

Cooper argued against terminating anyone.

"I would caution this commission that if we move forward, this action could be extremely costly to the residents," she said. "We are not here for personality politics."

But commissioners voted 3-1 to fire the city attorney, with Cooper casting the lone no vote.

London voted yes along with animal activist Michele Lazarow, who won re-election Nov. 8, and real estate broker Anabelle Taub, who easily beat Julian in one of Broward County's nastiest elections.

After Whitfield's firing, the mayor insisted the commission adjourn the meeting because there was no attorney present to provide legal advice. London argued that an assistant city attorney could take over along with the attorney who represents the city's redevelopment agency.

Cooper walked out and the meeting went on without her.

In February 2015, London made a move to fire Whitfield, saying he had lost confidence in her ability to give impartial advice to her commission bosses.

Whitfield, who is black, accused London of racial and gender bias.

Hallandale Beach hired an outside law firm to investigate her claims. London was cleared, but the investigation lasted a year and cost taxpayers more than \$100,000.

Whitfield, who has been the city attorney since December 2011, earned \$203,548 a year.

Rosemond was hired in February 2013 as an assistant city manager and executive director of Hallandale's redevelopment agency. He took over as city manager in January, earning \$180,400 a year.

The vote to hire Rosemond was not unanimous. London and Lazarow voted no, saying they wanted to do a national search.

MEDIA OUTLET: ABC Miami (Channel 10)

HEADLINE: Hallandale Beach fires city attorney; mayor walks out of divided meeting

BYLINE: Bob Norman

LINK: <http://www.local10.com/news/bob-norman/hallandale-beach-mayor-walks-out-of-divided-citys-meeting->

STORY: HALLANDALE BEACH, Fla. - The first City Commission meeting in Hallandale Beach since a contentious election didn't disappoint those expecting drama, coming complete with the firing of a top official, an emotional breakdown on the dais and the mayor storming out at the midway point.

"I will leave this meeting because I believe we are operating against our charter," Hallandale Beach Mayor Joy Cooper said as she walked off the dais, not to return.

Real estate broker Annabelle Taub hopes to replace Hallandale Beach vice mayor Mayor Joy Cooper walks out of a City Commission meeting after the city attorney was fired. At that point, the city's newly christened Vice Mayor Keith London walked over, grabbed the mayor's gavel and kept going.

It wasn't just a symbolic gesture. After this month's bitterly fought, big-money election, London is now the city's de facto leader, controlling a majority of votes on the commission.

London called the emergency meeting in order to fire not only City Attorney V. Lynn Whitfield, but also City Manager Daniel Rosemond, another of his longtime foes who was loyal to Cooper.

Cooper was the lone "no" vote against firing Whitfield, saying the move to fire Whitfield with cause -- and without a compensation package -- would lead to litigation that would cost taxpayers "an abundant amount of money."

"If you stand up to Commissioner London, you have a huge target on your back," Cooper said.

Voting to fire Whitfield were London and Commissioners Michele Lazarow and Annabelle Taub, the trio that now forms a majority bloc on the commission.

V. Lynn Whitfield cries as she says farewell during the City Commission meeting. Taub beat longtime Commissioner Bill Julian in November, who was caught on audiotape agreeing to accept secret gifts from a developer before a vote.

Julian also admitted to agreeing to accept the gifts in a Local 10 News interview in a report that sparked an ongoing criminal investigation by the state attorney's office.

Whitfield was also caught on audiotape offering Julian campaign advice shortly after admitting that her city position did not allow her to give the commissioner such advice.

London offered that tape -- along with the hiring of a recruitment company that London claimed was improper -- as causes to fire Whitfield, who broke down during her farewell speech.

Curiously, Whitfield said that her signature on the contract with that recruitment company was made by another lawyer and that she had no knowledge of it. London said that presented more problems, including possible forgery.

Former Hallandale Beach Vice Mayor Bill Julian was defeated by Annabelle Taub.

"I gave myself permission to be emotional today," she said before breaking down in tears. "To my friends on staff: We shared good times and rough times, but we will make it through it."

It was after that emotional speech that Cooper walked off the dais, saying that the firing left the commission without an attorney, in violation of the city charter.

But shortly after she walked out the door, London and his two allies immediately installed an interim city attorney, as well as outside counsel, and continued the meeting.

There was no vote on firing Rosemond after the outside counsel, Gray Robinson attorney Steven Zelkowitz, said the move required a resolution.

Rosemond did not attend the meeting, but his attorney, Freddy Perera, called the proceedings a "sham" and told the commission that Rosemond was prepared to engage in costly litigation should the commission go forward with firing the city manager with cause.

The commission voted to go forward with a resolution to fire Rosemond, but both parties left the door open to come up with a negotiated exit in the meantime.