

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Dispute over staffing of Town Clerk's Office flares up in Boston

- By Christopher Gordon
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The Boston Town Board is in the midst of a messy dispute over staffing in the Town Clerk's Office.

Last Monday, the State Police were called to the office of Town Clerk Jennifer A. Mulé. And Wednesday, the board retained attorney Brian W. Doyle to represent it in a possible legal dispute with Mulé.

At the center of the dispute is that Mulé recently appointed Elizabeth A. Martin and Sandra L. Quinlan to remain as her deputy town clerks, which she said she did Monday. However, the board appointed Maryann Cumming Mehs and Brianna Boncal as part-time clerks in the office. Councilman Jay P. Boardway said this was done because Martin and Quinlan did not reapply for their positions by the Dec. 9 deadline.

As a result, Boardway said, Martin and Quinlan have been essentially volunteering their services to the town since Monday.

"They are not paid employees of the Town of Boston," Boardway said, adding that they will not be paid for any work performed this week.

According to Boardway, Mulé came into the office at about 8:30 a.m. Monday, swore in Martin and Quinlan as her deputies and then refused to let Mehs and Boncal in the office. State Police were called in and were there for nearly two hours, Boardway said, but they determined that it was a civil matter rather than one involving possible criminality.

Boardway said that Mehs and Boncal have shown up for work each day but that they have been cross-training in other offices because Mulé will not work with them.

Boardway said the issue is simple. Martin and Quinlan did not reapply for their jobs, he said, adding that he was told that they gave their information to Mulé and that she did not give it to the Town Board.

As soon as the deadline passed, Boardway said, the town placed an ad for the two positions and received seven applications. The board interviewed all seven applicants and chose Mehs and Boncal.

Boardway said he hopes the issue is resolved soon because he is concerned about liability issues with Martin and Quinlan performing duties of deputy town clerk when they are not employed by the town.

Mulé said that in the past, there were no specific dates when applications had to be submitted. She also said that in the past, all applicants sent résumés to the office of the clerk, who then would send the information on to the board.

She said she had sent out a letter asking that résumés be returned by Dec. 14, and said she heard later that Supervisor Martin A. Ballowe was said to have informed about 10 employees to submit their letters to reapply by Dec. 9. According to Mulé, Town Attorney Michael L. Kobiolka, who was appointed as town attorney through Dec. 31, 2017, did not submit his letter to reapply until Dec. 27.

Mulé also said Martin and Quinlan did not reapply for their positions because she intended, as part of her duties, to appoint them as deputy town clerks. She believes that with 11 combined years of experience that they are the most qualified.

The town clerk said that she has nothing personal against Mehs and Boncal, and feels bad that they have been caught in the middle of the dispute. Mulé and the board have been at odds for several months and said this issue has now become personal for her. She said that while Ballowe is her future brother-in-law, they are not now related.

Mulé said she was informed recently that instead of one full-time deputy clerk and a part-time clerk, the board decided to cut the hours of the full-time member to part time, and cut the hours of the part-time clerk even more.

She added that she also is concerned because the board hired two office clerks, not town clerks, and that they cannot legally perform some functions that town clerks do until she deputizes them.

Mulé said she has not made up her mind about whether to bring a lawsuit against the board.

“It’s going to depend,” she said. “I have more things to look into.”

She said that includes taking a look at the 2016 budget that was passed in November, in which the board approved hiring town clerks.