

agreed, with Romanello calling for a postponement of the attorney appointment until questions could be answered. The postponement passed 5-1 with Schoening the only dissenter.

Public comments came from supporters of the Home Rule Charter. Laura Kronick, the one who signed the \$5 expenditure report on behalf of Citizens for Home Rule, claimed it was an honest mistake and that a hearing officer had already dismissed it. Matthew Brunk pleaded with the council to search their hearts to do the right thing. Patty Shank attacked the council as “horrible, horrible, horrible people who have let this town down.” Jen-

nifer Wagner claimed, “Most of the town would prefer you would walk out right now,” and Chad Smith followed, “It’s an enormous blessing to have you all off the board [next month].”

Incoming councilmember King, who won with the most number of votes in November but who is now being accused of electioneering, read from prepared notes that accused the councilmembers of ethics violations themselves. He claimed there was already an investigation with the secretary of state, a claim that turned out to be unsubstantiated (King later claimed to have heard this through a conversation with the town clerk). He also claimed that the trustees should have all left their posts immediately following the election. “If you had any ethics, you would have left on November 8 when your terms expired ... instead of burning the town on your way out.” According to Deputy Town Clerk Tina Erickson, trustee terms expired in November but new councilmembers will not be sworn in until January.

The special meeting adjourned without responses from the board.

Special meeting on Dec. 16

The second meeting was called with an appointed parliamentarian, Gregory Carlson, to help keep the meeting to conform to Rules of Parliamentarian Law. The meeting passed Resolution No. 95-2022: “Resolution to Hire Special Attorney Grant Van Der Jagt for the Investigation of Concerns the Council has Identified Related to the November 2022 Election and 2A and to Fully Execute Mr. Grant Van Der Jagt’s Letter of Engagement.” The resolution passed 4-1 with incoming mayor-elect LaKind dissenting. Councilmember Ramos was not present.

Van Der Jagt declared to the board, “My al-

legiance is to seek the truth, not to any particular character.” He explained some background to friendships he has with many of the characters involved, including being Facebook friends with LaKind and personally investigating some online rumors about Schoening. “I don’t have any financial connection with the town of Monument,” he emphasized, “and I have no conflict of interest with any of you.”

LaKind presented an email he received that accused Van Der Jagt of representing Schoening in the past. “If you were to take this position, some of our citizens will report you to the bar,” LaKind said. Van Der Jagt read the email aloud and gave the context that Schoening was never his client, but that he did personal research to dispel an online rumor that Schoening was a convicted felon. “If she were my client, I would not be allowed to comment. I did this research myself.” Romanello asked, “Just to be sure, Darcy [Schoening] did not hire you and was not your client, correct?” Van Der Jagt affirmed this was correct. Romanello pressed further, “Why would you be qualified?” Van Der Jagt said that he had never had an ethics violation against him and that if he ever came across conflicting information, “I would have the legal duty to report it.”

Town Manager Mike Foreman asked the board for permission to hire an attorney to represent the town, with which both LaKind and Elliott agreed. LaKind motioned to hire a town attorney and Stephens seconded. Though Van Der Jagt cautioned that dealing with an attorney rather than the staff directly would slow down the investigation, the motion passed 4-1 with Schoening dissenting. Van Der Jagt followed, “My position is ‘truth over politics.’ I am political, it is my civic duty, but truth is my principle.”

Romanello, who lost to LaKind in his run for mayor of Monument, said, “None of this looks or smells good. I support Mayor LaKind 1,000%. I don’t have any sour grapes in this at all. But when I look at the emails and the Home Rule Commission were told something was okay, it is very concerning. If the interim town attorney was involved, there is a conflict of interest. Question for Foreman: Did you take part?”

Foreman responded, “The town has paid for educational materials before. In this case, the town did not knowingly pay for materials that told the town how to vote.” LaKind added, “And when it was discovered the town was made whole.” Schoening countered, “We shouldn’t use the term, ‘the town was made whole.’” LaKind returned, “I meant the town was paid back, and I can use the term that I want, whether you like it or not.”

Several public comments were made. Matthew Blunt expressed that he believed everything was done right. Ken Kimple accused the board of arrogance and declared, “A new day begins Jan. 3.” Laurie LaGraw noted that the board member names had been removed from the town website, and Elliott asked Foreman why they were (no answer was given). Joe Needler had an exchange at the podium with Van Der Jagt about the cost of his legal services. Van Der Jagt said, “You might be pleasantly surprised at my findings, and the results could be educational for the new board. This is money spent trying to make Monument run better.” Others commented on how the investigation was a witch hunt

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