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Public Comments Session Tues, 5/7/24 – Questions that linger in my mind (2nd Sargeant Report)

Good evening commissioners.

Some people say that elected officials - including some here – sometimes do whatever they want because they figure people will forget about those things by the time the next election rolls around.

I don't know whether that's actually true of anyone here on this board, but just in case, I want to share with you some of the thoughts that roll around in my head...questions that I still have...things I haven't forgotten about.

I think about the Sargeant report. The 2nd Sargeant report, mostly. The first Sargeant report was prepared by independent outside counsel, Bernadette Sargeant of Stinson Law Firm in DC, and it revealed some rather disturbing findings regarding one Commissioner who was found to “lack credibility” and to have created a hostile work environment.

And that snowballed into a lawsuit, which we're still embroiled in, and paying for, and to the release of documents, which included some Commissioner closed session meeting minutes that show that two other commissioners were willing to take

what was obviously an illegal vote to remove a county employee, and exposed us to legal action as a result.

So we've seen the 1st Sergeant Report, but there has been reluctance by three of you to release the second report, also prepared by Ms. Sargeant.

So I wonder, what could be in the 2nd report that wasn't dealt with in the first report?

How much worse could it be than in the first report?

And why are three commissioners - not just one, not just 2, but three commissioners - committed to keeping that report from the public?

The citizens paid for the report. The report concerns the activities of their local government. And my recollection is that the reason given for not making the report public is that it is a "Personnel matter."

Which only raises more questions.

Because the citizens of Charles County are the effective "supervisors" of the Commissioners. So how can the citizens be denied from seeing the report? How can the supervisory body not be granted the opportunity to review the report they paid for?

How can Commissioners be protected from the citizens finding out information in a report because it's a PERSONNEL matter, and yet Commissioners are not subject to the disciplinary actions described in the PERSONNEL Policy & Procedures Manual?

It should be one or the other, don't you think?

It just keeps nagging at me, how this 2nd Sargeant report is being hidden behind the "wall" of "Personnel" matters, while at the same time, Commissioners are not subject to the weight – the responsibility - of "Personnel" policies.

That is and will remain a lingering question.