

Supervisor Shannon Price
Township Board Members

As most of you may be aware, in April 2014 I retired from the Plymouth Township Police Department as a Sergeant. I served and protected the residents of this community for twenty eight years and am very proud of my work record. Just prior to my retiring, I was contacted by Treasurer Ron Edwards who offered me the position as the park foreman, supervising the summer help and managing the maintenance of the parks and Township grounds. I was told by Mr. Edwards that as a Police Officer, he liked the way that I ran my platoon, and he needed someone like me to "keep those kids working." I accepted his offer and worked very hard each of the last two summers. In August 2015, Mike Mitchell was hired by Plymouth Township and was given the newly appointed title as the 'Director of Parks', which made him my direct supervisor. Over this past winter I had several discussions with Park Director Mike Mitchell, and he assured me that he wanted me to continue working at the park. Plans were agreed upon for me to begin working on April 1, 2016. In fact, Mike Mitchell and I have even met at local establishments to discuss our plans for the upcoming summer season. On March 17, 2016 I was with Mr. Mitchell and he again assured me that I would be working in the capacity of Park Foreman this year. Mr. Mitchell did tell me that Treasurer Edwards, and HR Director JoAnn Coobatis, did not want to continue my employment. Mitchell explained to me that he approached the Plymouth Township Supervisor, Shannon Price, with that information, and told Mr. Price that he (Mitchell) definitely wanted me back this summer, and that Mr. Price said that was fine. Mr. Mitchell looked me square in the eye and told me "I have your back."

On March 28, 2016 I showed up at the park pavilion to meet with Mr. Mitchell. Prior to going into the office area of the pavilion, I ran into the Park's winter foreman just outside of the pavilion door. I was told by him that a new guy had been hired to replace me. I then went inside the office. Present at that time were HR Director Joann Coobatis, Park Director Mike Mitchell, and the new hire to replace me, Matt Kidd. While Ms. Coobatis was on the phone and Mr. Kidd filling out paperwork, I asked Mike what was going on and he told me that he had been "overruled by HR" and that I would have to talk to Joann Coobatis about it. When Ms. Coobatis was finished with her phone conversation, I asked her what was going on. She said that due to "all of the past problems" with me they decided to hire someone else. I asked Ms. Coobatis to explain which problems she was referring to. She could not provide me with any specific reason(s). I began asking her if I was being fired because I would not allow kids to show up late, holding them accountable and responsible for their actions, performing substandard work, etc. Ms. Coobatis could not provide me a clear answer. I terminated the conversation and walked out.

Needless to say, I am extremely troubled by the embarrassing treatment that I received. Why did Director Mitchell assure me that I would be continuing my employment with the Township if I was the source of so many problems? Why would he express his pleasure to me about the way I ran the park and supervised the employees that worked under me? I worked very closely with Mr. Mitchell last summer and he never once expressed any concerns about my work performance. He praised and thanked me for holding the summer help to a higher standard that they were unaccustomed to.

I am very disappointed to report that I have come to the belief and conclusion that my employment with the Township was terminated by Treasurer Ron Edwards who ordered Mike Mitchell and Joann Coobatis to fire me.

The following are just a few of the many reasons that I believe attributed to me being dismissed from my position at the Park;

Reason #1 - I would not go along with Treasurer Edwards's plans to hire kids who's parent's politically support Treasurer Edwards. Many of these kids referred to themselves as "political appointee's" of Mr. Edwards'. They made it very clear to me that they were only at the park because their parents were friends of Ron Edwards and that they were not really expected to perform any type of strenuous labor. These kids, 8 to 10 of them, would show up late for work, wearing flip flops and bathing suit tops, yoga pants (females) and expect to get paid \$12.00 an hour for doing next to nothing. In fact, at approximately 9am one morning I took a picture one of the kids sleeping on a picnic table with a broom in her hand at the main pavilion while she was on the clock and supposed to be cleaning. I showed the picture

to Mr. Edwards and Ms. Coobatis and they both laughed. No corrective action was even taken. Last summer, after Park Director Mitchell was hired I continued putting an end to these "no work jobs." I told the kids that it didn't concern me who their parents are. If they are getting paid they would have to work. A few of the kids agreed and did a great job for us. Others complained to Treasurer Edwards, who then warned me to "leave them alone." When I complained, I was warned by Treasurer Edwards who stated, "Eric don't even go there!" Heeding his warning I focused on the kids that wanted to work and do a good job. Many of the kids thanked me for teaching them how to safely use the park equipment and have sent me e-mails expressing their disappointment in hearing that I was fired. (See attached e-mail for further clarification). Treasurer Edwards made all of the hiring decisions. When I attempted to implement corrective actions of any kind for them not doing their jobs my employment was threatened. In fact, I would send them to Mr. Edwards and he would just re-assign them to work at Township Hall instead of the Park. I was told by Mr. Edwards that "...he owed their father's big favors."

Reason #2 – On July 3, 2015 I witnessed an incident involving Treasurer Ron Edwards that involved a Felonious Assault and Careless-Reckless Driving resulting in a traffic accident.

I was an eye witness from start to finish. I observed Treasurer Edwards who, in a fit of rage, chase after and assault Mike Mitchell. I observed Edwards drive his vehicle at a high rate of speed out of the park and onto Ann Arbor Trail, nearly colliding with approaching E/B traffic. Mike Mitchell and I were on the shoulder of the road placing 'no parking' signs just West of the park entrance. Edwards recklessly drove his vehicle directly towards us, committing several traffic violations including careless and reckless driving, and ended with his vehicle facing northbound on the North shoulder, just below where Mitchell and I were working. Edwards jumped out of his car screaming and swearing at Mike Mitchell telling him that he was "fired, and to get the fuck out of my park." Edwards was so enraged I believed that he was capable of running both of us over with his vehicle. After driving his car onto the shoulder area he jumped out his car leaving it in reverse. His vehicle rolled back into on-coming traffic striking a trailer that was attached to a landscape truck that was traveling W/B on Ann Arbor Tr. Edwards ran to his vehicle and angrily pulled it forward after striking the trailer. He jumped out again and continued his verbal attacks. Once again, Mr. Edwards did not put his vehicle in park and it rolled back and struck the trailer for the second time. The truck's driver got out of his vehicle and asked Edwards "what the hell are you doing." The damage to the trailer was minimal. Mr. Edwards called the Plymouth Township Police Department on his cell phone and reported the incident as he was conversing with the driver of the truck. After a few minutes, the truck driver drove off. Mr. Edwards once again focused his anger towards Mike Mitchell. He told Mitchell that he was fired and words were exchanged between the two. Mr. Edwards then armed himself with a 4 foot wooden stake and came towards Mr. Mitchell in a menacing manner, coming within just a few feet of Mitchell. Mitchell responded by asking Edwards if he intended to hit him with the stake. Mr. Edwards then threw the wooden stake on the ground, walked back to his vehicle, got inside, and drove away.

This all occurred in front of several park employees who also witnessed this confrontation.

I was questioned that day by the Chief of Police and by Supervisor Price on separate occasions regarding the altercation. I explained the exact details to each of them.

Several days after this incident it was clear that a cover up was taking place. Mr. Edwards called me while I was off-duty and began asking me questions about what was written in the police report, and how long after an incident are the police required to complete and submit a report? It appeared to me that Mr. Edwards was trying to put a story together in order to discredit the police officer that responded to the park as a result of the traffic accident and confrontation. A few days later Mr. Edwards approached me while at the Park. He said to me, " I got them now. They lied on the report." He seem elated while sharing that information with me.

A few days later I was in the Park office with Mr. Mitchell and reporter Don Howard came in. Mr. Howard wanted to ask questions about the incident. Mike Mitchell lied to the reporter and told him that nothing happened at all. No yelling, no fight, no argument. I sat silent knowing that Mitchell was blatantly lying, but I did not want to jeopardize my job by telling what really happened. To this day, I'm not even certain if any of the other witnesses were ever interviewed by HR to explain what they saw.

I am also aware of questionable expenditures and a great deal of wasted money being spent with no oversight. (i.e. sod at the Township Park's new pavilion that mostly died because it was quickly layed without proper irrigation so that it would be ready by the 4th of July).

Since I am no longer an employee of Plymouth Township, I would have no issues in providing additional details and information regarding these matters, honestly, and to the best of my knowledge.

It is sad and unfortunate that Township elected officials will go to such lengths to silence honorable and honest workers. This is nothing new; it has been going on since Treasurer Edwards was elected.

Hopefully, this board will see fit to initiate an ethics investigation into the things that I described. All of the employees know that I am telling the truth, yet an effort will now be underway to discredit me and suggest that I am a disgruntled employee that was fired. I'm 58 years old and someone might say this is age-discrimination but the fact is I was fired without due process. I'm not hinting at any type of threat or legal redress. My employment record speaks for itself at both the Park and the Police Department.

I have been unjustly treated. My good name and integrity has been besmirched by slanderous and liable accusations made against me, and I have been terminated without just cause. I respectfully request that I be reinstated as Park Foreman, as promised to me by the Director of Parks, Mike Mitchell, forthwith.

Sincerely,
Eric Anderson