

Powers

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were the last straw.”

“If I could spare my family a public fight against unfounded allegations, then that is what I wanted,” he said.

Investigation

Commissioned by the county, the five-month investigation into Powers began in late September 2021 by attorney Marilou F. Mirkovich, a partner with the

Cerritos-based law firm Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo.

The report, which includes interviews with 11 county employees, was delivered Feb. 23 to the county’s lead attorney, Tiffany North, according to the document that is marked as a draft.

In an email to the *Acorn*, North said she would not comment on the report, its cost to prepare or Powers’ statement that he was not allowed to view the document before the board’s closed-door vote to place him on leave.

The female employee, who worked directly under Powers’ supervision, told the outside investigator that the county CEO “grabbed both of her hands, placed his tongue in her mouth, and kissed her” inside a parking structure as she was getting into her car after a dinner the pair had together at a Ventura restaurant in January 2019, the report states.

“(The woman) stated that in response to Mr. Powers’ actions she put her hand up and said, ‘No,’” the report says.

He said he wanted to sleep with her, the woman said, and that he kissed her again, allegations which Powers denies. The county executive did admit, according to the investigation report, that the two had dinner together on the night in question and had a conversation at her car but says it was only to say that he cared about her.

It was also reported that about a month later, Powers called the woman into his office and “kissed her on the lips,” according to the report.

The woman asserts in the report that at no time was she interested in a romantic relationship with Powers, who is 15 years her senior.

“There’s nothing physically or personally attractive to me about Mr. Powers,” she’s quoted as telling the law firm.

Mirkovich’s office found the woman’s allegations credible based on witness testimony and other evidence, such as receipts and phone records—specifically calls and texts the woman made to others documenting the incidents, the report says.

For example, phone records showed the woman called another man, her boyfriend, at 10:23 the night she alleged she was kissed; and he testified that she told him what happened, according to the report.

It was also documented in the report that the woman spoke to a co-worker, a friend, a few months after the Jan. 31, 2019, incident. The two shared text messages “concerning Mr. Powers’ conduct” which were provided as evidence.

The copy of the report provided to the *Acorn* did not include the attached evidence listed in the investigation.

As for why she didn’t report

the harassment sooner, the woman said she feared human resources would seek to protect Powers and the organization over her and that she could be fired, the report says.

County officials are not commenting on the report.

Brian Miller, chief of staff for Supervisor Kelly Long, said North told supervisors not to discuss the report and to refer all questions to her office.

Mirkovich has not returned multiple calls seeking comment. Attempts to reach the accuser were unsuccessful.

Who knew what, when

Although the woman told the investigators she’d told two people she considered friends in the county office about Powers’ advances between 2019 and 2020, the allegations did not come to the attention of human resources until September 2021 after a

Rivera (her name)’ and not ‘Santa Monica (her name)’ inherently suggests that the term is rooted in racial and national origin stereotypes,” it says.

Ruiz and the woman later talked on the phone, and during that conversation, Ruiz told investigators, the woman “broke down” and told her about the earlier alleged sexual harassment by Powers, according to the report.

Even though the woman told Ruiz not to go to her superiors just yet, when the woman showed up to work Mon., Sept. 20, the report says, Human Resources Director Shawn Atin called her in for a meeting.

Two days later, Atin met with Powers to tell him about the complaint. Between Sept. 22 and 23, the report says, Powers texted and called the woman several times, allegations confirmed by phone records and text messages provided as evidence.

By week’s end, Mirkovich and her firm were hired to begin the investigation into the woman’s allegations. That’s when the woman went on leave, per the report. She has never returned to the office, although her name and title are still listed on the county website.

The report also found that Powers violated the woman’s medical leave rights in the spring of 2020 when she was out for a surgery and the CEO required that she do work while recuperating.

Resignation

Powers’ abrupt resignation was a dizzying fall from grace for the executive who was regularly lauded by supervisors and those who worked with him. Just last year, he received a five-year extension that provided him over \$500,000 a year in pay and benefits.

At the time of the extension, supervisors praised Powers’ performance during the pandemic.

“Mr. Powers has demonstrated tremendous leadership as our county executive officer, delivering on the goals set forth by our board while guiding the county through the challenges and impacts of the pandemic,” Supervisor Linda Parks said in a July 2021 statement.

Within hours of his resignation, staff removed his bio from the county webpage. The county, meanwhile, released a statement saying Powers was leaving to “spend more time with his family.”

Powers is married with two children.

He told the *Acorn* he did not act inappropriately with the accuser or at any time as county CEO.

“I do believe I acted appropriately with (her) and, if anything, have been incredibly supportive of her,” he said.

Powers, who was hired in 1992 as an attorney in the county counsel’s office, has served as county CEO since 2011. Before that, he headed the county’s Health Care Agency.

As the county’s top executive, he oversaw an organization with 9,700 employees and an annual budget of \$2 billion.

Parks had no comment on the case matter Tuesday but said the supervisors are planning to name an interim CEO at their March 22 meeting. Deputy County CEO Mike Pettit has served in that role since Powers’ exit.

Powers will not receive severance but he will get \$165,000 in accrued annual leave, as would any county employee, North said.



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