

The Phyllis Smith Sorry-Not-Sorry Apology Rant

Thank you very much. I, um, first off I did survive three weeks with my two year old, four year old and seven year old grandchild in Atlanta so I'm back.

Um, I want to apologize this is a very important message and I hope the audience that's out there listening and I hope the people that came tonight and staff will give me an opportunity to say this clearly.

[On script] I want to apologize to the residents, the staff and my colleagues for not having the stamina to stay for the August 28th special meeting and to vote.

I had asked tonight to be recognized and when I wasn't I think this is important enough for me to give it on good & plenty.

I have lived in this city for 45 years. I've been a successful businesswoman for 40. I have married to an honest hard working man for 50 and I am 70 years old.

There's a lot of benefit that my knowledge and experiences will add for this city to grow and to be a better place to live, work and play. I believe my role as an elected official is to study information need to make the best decisions for the residents, businesses and employees of North Miami Beach. The reason there are seven seats to vote is so that each person can independently come to conclusion that they believe will achieve this goal.

I may not be as articulate as some of the people sitting up here, but I do follow the rules.

Due to the Florida Sunshine law, there is no previous discussion among us.

Yet many times one of us has discovered something that when shared at a council meeting may benefit others in their votes.

[Off script] I know I personally have changed my vote in reference to the school that is coming before us because I was given information by one of the council people.

[On script] And sometimes things just need to be put on the record. This special meeting was called about insurance. I was greatly concerned as to why a special meeting was necessary. Insurance enrollment has always had to be done before October 1st in the almost 10 years that I have been here. It's never changed.

The fact that it has been said over and over that we have to pay top dollar for directors of departments to obtain top performance and top professionals, I felt that my questions and concerns and the responses need to go on the record in "pertuity."

The HR director who was employed by this city for over eleven months said herself that the insurance for employees that we currently had was the most complaints she received.

Why then at the very least wasn't an alternative looked at by human resource under the direction of this director? And her words were, "This came about at the eleventh hour."

Why? If an insurance company that would serve us our employees nationwide was the goal, why didn't the HR director under her department research which companies apply and get quotes months ago?

This council voted not to use an insurance brokerage firm and yet, here we are back again using a brokerage firm.

This goes under the budget, this is another \$50,000.00 that our residents pay in taxes.

Yes, to me these were necessary insurance questions for how our residents' dollars were being spent and the benefit the employees were getting. This may really come to a larger issue than just what I am stating as this is now being investigated for some alleged allegations.

This line of transparency from my elected position was, as usual, shut down by the chair and backed up by the fellow council members, rolling their eyes, speaking under their breath and carrying on in a bullying manner that I have endured for too long.

Month after month this continues. This may not be caught on camera nor known to the public but is very unpleasant hostile environment up here.

[Off script] Listen. I reached my breaking point. I wanna say it very clearly. I been here 10 years come May. What a sad day it is to hate to have to come to the city when I have enjoyed so much and our city is moving forward in such a fabulous direction.

[Still off script] Listen.

[On script] Twice in one week, to be told that if you listen to the meetings, listen to the meetings, by the chair that what I could and couldn't be done when it clearly applied to the topic was more than I was willing to take.

I was elected to take care of the public, but I am human, too.

[Off script] So I actually became physically ill. I called, the clerk called, she said, "Go home. It's okay." I went home and my husband said, "You have to go back." Shaking, I got in the car. Tried to call the clerk, tell her I'm on my way back, she didn't pick up. Tried to call the manager, her I'm on my way back, she didn't pick up. I couldn't drive I pulled over to the side of the road to call my husband. "Come get me take me to City Hall." He said, "Come home, Councilman DeFillipo's coming in."

To that I thank you. I didn't have his number. I called the city to be sure to thank him.

[On script] My duties have never been abandoned. In fact, if you ask residents and staff which council person has been the most involved with city functions and residents' events outside of the council meeting, I am positive I would get a vast number of those votes.

My goal is to continue putting the residents' needs before mine. And I will continue in spite of the bullying and childish behavior...

[Off script] ...with the lack of respect that I heard tonight that how we must respect each other and I wasn't even given a chance to have a point of order.

[Still off script] So I will tell you if this whatever goes on here I'm 70 years old I've never experienced before I'm not sure why we have to have this demeanor in a city. I don't know I don't know why people that are so blessed in their home in their life want to treat other people less than themselves. I don't know why they want to diminish somebody's candle to make theirs burn brighter. And I certainly don't know why they wouldn't have the respect for the seat that was earned by everybody else.

I have listened to the tussling and the huffing and the huffing. I have watched the whispering.

But each one of us has a right to the opinion that we feel is best for the residents.

We have that right! I'll respect whoever else has a difference of opinion than mine. I understand that's the way you feel. Even tonight to say this is such a good thing this is perfect for our city this is the way it's du... That's his opinion! That's his opinion and he's entitled to that opinion.

I, on the other hand, looked at it completely different and I'm entitled to that opinion.

With that I wanna say to you again that to staff, the residents, my fellow colleagues, I do apologize that was really beyond my brink I was preparing to leave town for the first time ever in my life for an extended period of time and have a family that I couldn't reach with their three children in my charge.

I was very cramped for time and yet I absolutely was determined to come to make sure the employees didn't have insurance.

But unfortunately, it was over the top of what my system could take.

And I will tell you sitting up here I was elected to serve and I intend to serve.

And I thank each and every one of you for listening to me. I appreciate your putting me in this position. I respect the responsibility that I have.

Thank you and good night.