

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 2, 2024

MILLERSVILLE, TN – There have been several changes at the City of Millersville, which began with the December 19, 2023 special election when voters overwhelmingly chose Alisa Huling to join the City Commission to help take the City in a new direction. This new direction included relieving City Manager Scott Avery of his duties and appointing Tina Tobin as Interim City Manager on January 23, 2024.

Upon taking office, Ms. Tobin discovered that files appeared to be missing from the City Manager's office. Ms. Tobin immediately addressed these and other security issues in the City, including bringing in IT professionals to remedy cybersecurity issues. Ms. Tobin had a forensic audit conducted and learned that there was a mass deletion of files off the City Manager's laptop a few days before Mrs. Tobin took office, as well as a mass deletion of text messages by the prior City Manager.

In addition to the concealment and destruction of City files, Ms. Tobin also learned that attempts had been made to access and surreptitiously monitor Ms. Tobin's office computer. These issues raise serious concerns about illegalities taking place at the City, which is still under investigation.

Ms. Tobin also discovered that the City's electronic data files were not being backed up, even though a dedicated server was available on-site and cheap options were available for off-site storage. These basic safeguards were inexplicably never implemented by the prior administration. Ms. Tobin immediately addressed these issues such that all of the City's files and emails are now being backed up and secure.

Ms. Tobin analyzed the City's accounting practices, and discovered that Millersville's bank accounts were earning 0% to 0.1% interest, which resulted in a mere \$6,199 in interest earned for the City in 2023. The prior administration failed to competently invest the City's funds and take advantage of a 5% return on investments by participating in the Tennessee Bank Collateral Pool, which resulted in the City not receiving over \$417,810.79 in interest income for 2023 that it desperately needs:

2023 Pool RATES	LOST INTEREST	
January	4.25%	28,928.10
Febuary	4.51%	30,806.54
March	4.64%	31,813.65
April	4.71%	32,418.47
May	4.91%	33,927.69
June	5.06%	35,107.24
July	5.16%	35,952.02
August	5.25%	36,736.38
September	5.33%	37,459.35
October	5.39%	38,049.28
November	5.40%	38,291.10
December	5.38%	38,320.95
		417,810.79

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Ms. Tobin learned that the current bank utilized by The City of Millersville could have participated in this program. Ms. Tobin's actions since being in office will allow the City to benefit from this interest income in 2024. Another concern was that the bank account deposits were not fully backed by the FDIC insurance coverage because they exceeded the coverage limits. By utilizing the Tennessee Bank Collateral Pool, Ms. Tobin will ensure that all public deposits in excess of FDIC insurance coverage will be secured, which is an important benefit of participation.

The Millersville Police Department has had serious issues over the years under prior police chiefs, including hiring police officers who lacked POST certifications required by law. There were also concerns over the manner in which police commissions were being issued to reserve officers who were working for private security companies in other counties.

Under the Millersville Charter, the police chief serves at the pleasure of the City Manager. Although the City Manager does not need a reason to terminate the City's police chief, Ms. Tobin had numerous reasons for her decision. There were two candidates presented to the Commission, Rob Richman and a candidate from New Jersey. In-state candidates were not considered by the prior City Manager, who failed to mention that there were several controversies involving Mr. Richman while he was in Texas. Mr. Richman was sworn in on December 23rd, and an article exposing numerous incidents that happened during his administration was posted later that same day. Text messages from the prior City Manager demonstrate that he was aware of these issues but did not disclose them.

There were also obvious security issues with the police department that should have been immediately addressed by Mr. Richman. There were other issues that raised concerns, including the fact that Mr. Richman said during a recorded meeting that he had 15 officers and was planning on hiring three more when there are actually only eight police officers. Mr. Richman also placed Scott Avery on the schedule as a "Reserve Officer" even though he had been relieved of his duties as a City Manager.

Ms. Tobin hired Bryan Morris to be the interim police chief, who had previously applied for the position at Millersville. Chief Morris brings over two decades of experience in law enforcement and the security field. Chief Morris also worked for the Millersville Police Department in the mid-2000s and is familiar with this City.

Ms. Tobin has also selected attorney Bryant Kroll to serve as the City Attorney. Mr. Kroll has almost ten years of experience with legal issues involving municipal corporations. Ms. Tobin was aware that Mr. Kroll was previously involved in lawsuits against the City, but has none pending at the time of his appointment. As such, there is no conflict of interest with Mr. Kroll serving as City Attorney.

Ms. Tobin has uncovered issues with potential fraud, waste and abuse at the City that have been reported to the Comptroller's office. These issues cannot be discussed in more detail at this time because the investigation is ongoing.

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In addition, the City is aware of a lawsuit that has been filed by Winston Templet, whose wife serves on the Commission, claiming a violation of the Open Meetings Act. Mr. Templet is represented by former City Attorney Jack Freedle. Due to the pending litigation, Ms. Tobin cannot comment further about this issue at this time.

For further information, please contact City Attorney Bryant Kroll via email at Bryant@BryantKroll.com