

Town of Bethany - Independent Investigation Letters of Interest

1. **Objective:**

The Town of Bethany is seeking a qualified firm or person to perform an independent investigation and review of the Town of Bethany's response after a report of an alleged sexual abuse of several children by a counselor in the town's after school program run by the Parks and Recreation Department was made in December 2022. Also, if appropriate, if any person was made aware of or reported an allegation prior to December 2022. The Town of Bethany seeks an independent investigation of the Town's handling of the notification of an investigation of employee Anthony Mastrangelo and to uncover the facts, assess any breaches of policies, laws, or regulations, and provide recommendations.

An independent, outside, unbiased investigation is desired because the First Selectwoman is related by marriage to the Director and Assistant Director of the Parks and Recreation Department and has acknowledged that the Defendant's (Anthony Mastrangelo) family is friends with her family, resulting in an actual or perceived conflict of interest. The Director and Assistant Director and the Defendant counselor were not hired by the current First Selectwoman. They held these positions prior to her being elected to that office. The First Selectwoman has recused herself from the independent investigation.

2. **Background:**

Town residents became aware of allegations of sexual abuse from news media reports in late June, 2024, as a result of a press release by the Connecticut State Police announcing several arrest warrants served on the Defendant, Anthony Mastrangelo, in May and June of 2024.¹ Reportedly the Bethany Community School (BCS) was notified by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in December 2022 that a complaint had been filed about Anthony Mastrangelo, a counselor in the Parks and Recreation after school program and an intern and substitute teacher at BCS. Reportedly BCS informed the Parks and Recreation Department immediately of this information. Reportedly the Defendant was immediately removed from employment at the school and with the after-school program. At an unknown time he was removed from the Park and Recreation Department, although he remained employed by the Parks and Recreation Department until June 2023. At some later date or dates after the December 2022 initial notification by DCF, town and school officials may have received additional information regarding the allegation such as that the complaint was about sexual abuse, that more than one minor victim was involved, and that DCF had referred the case to the state police for criminal investigation. Reportedly the Defendant sexually abused another child in a private home in May 2024.

¹ See Attachment A "Arrest warrants and affidavits"

3. Scope of Work:

This scope of work ensures a thorough, impartial, and systematic investigation of reports of the Town of Bethany's response to reports of an investigation of a town employee in December 2022, including but not limited to, who knew, what he/she/they knew, when he/she/they knew, what was done after the initial report and by whom and when.

The following describes in general the anticipated scope of work, but is not meant to limit the investigation and review as it may develop.

Preparation:

Review initial reports and documents.

Develop an investigation plan outlining key steps, timelines, and resources needed.

Interviews:

Identify and interview all relevant parties, including witnesses, complainants, and subjects of the investigation. Prepare interview questions in advance and ensure that interviews are conducted in a fair and unbiased manner. Record interviews (with consent) and take detailed notes.

Documents and Evidence:

Collect and review all relevant documents, emails, communications, and records. Secure any physical or electronic evidence pertinent to the investigation. Examine any physical evidence including locations, objects, and other tangible items. Analyze digital evidence such as electronic communications, logs, and recordings.

Analysis:

Cross-check interview responses with documentary and physical evidence to identify consistencies and discrepancies. Assess the credibility and reliability of the information collected. Determine whether any policies, procedures, laws, or regulations were violated.

Evaluate the context and circumstances surrounding the town's response.

Reporting:

Prepare a preliminary report summarizing initial findings and any immediate concerns.

Present the preliminary report to Selectmen Robert Brinton and Gina Teixeira for the purpose of communicating the progress of the investigation.

Final Report:

Draft a comprehensive final report detailing the investigation process, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The report should include:

Executive summary

Background

Methodology of the investigation

Findings

Conclusions

Recommendations for corrective actions or policy changes

Ensure the final report is clear, concise, and supported by evidence.

The final report will be released to the public.

Recommendations:

Provide recommendations based on the findings.

Suggest corrective actions, disciplinary measures, or policy changes as appropriate.

Recommend preventive measures.

Provide guidance regarding proper communication protocols in response to town notifications of investigations involving town employees.

Communication:

Maintain regular communication with Selectmen Robert Brinton and Gina Teixeira throughout the investigation.

Ensure confidentiality and handle all information sensitively.

Provide updates on the investigation's progress.

Confidentiality and Legal Compliance:

Ensure all investigation activities comply with legal and regulatory requirements.

Maintain strict confidentiality to protect the privacy of individuals involved.

Document and store all evidence and investigation records securely.

Documentation and Record-Keeping:

Keep detailed records of all investigation activities, including interview notes, evidence collected, and communications.

Ensure proper documentation of the investigation process and findings.

Store investigation records securely.

4. **Submission and Deadline:**

Responses will be received by the Town of Bethany Board of Selectmen until 2:00 p.m., Monday, September 23, 2024. Solicitation information is available on the Town website: www.bethany-ct.com.

5. **Responses**

Responses shall contain the following:

Letter of Interest:

The letter should include a brief discussion of the investigator's background, experience, and ability to perform this contract.

Project Understanding and Approach:

Please provide a written summary in sufficient detail to demonstrate an understanding of the project, and the investigator's anticipated approach to the investigation.

Firm Experience:

Please provide a detailed written summary of the investigator's relevant background, education, qualifications, experience, and capability to perform the anticipated scope of work.

Staff Plan & Qualifications:

Please identify the personnel who will work on the investigation and review, and their roles and responsibilities. Provide information about the background, education, qualifications, and experience relevant to this project, and provide resumes of all personnel.

References:

Please provide at least three (3) references, ideally from similar investigation and review projects. Please include names, titles, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses so the town may contact these references. Please provide sufficient details to indicate the type of services performed and the deliverables provided. References should be for projects similar to the scope of services for this investigation, and should be recent.

Schedule:

Please provide an anticipated schedule for the investigation and review.

Fee Proposal:

Please submit the hourly rate or rates for personnel that will be involved in the investigation and review. If any other charges are proposed, please list the rates.

6. Letter of Interest Evaluation:

(a.) The investigator must have experience performing similar investigations and reviews.

(b.) Preferred Experience: The investigator should have knowledge of and experience with criminal investigations, education law, employment law, and standards and requirements applicable to after-school childcare and/ or Parks and Recreation programs.

(c.) The town reserves the right to reject any or all letters of interest, to accept any proposal, to negotiate changes to proposal terms, and to waive minor inconsistencies, if deemed in the best interest of the town.

(d.) Some or all investigators may be invited to an interview with the Board of Selectmen.

(e.) Insurance: If a contract is reached with a firm, said firm shall, at its own expense and cost, obtain and keep in force during the entire duration of the engagement the following insurance coverage covering the firm and all of its agents, employees and sub-contractors and other providers of services and shall name the Town of Bethany, their employees and agents, as an Additional Insured on a primary and non-contributory basis to the firm's Commercial General Liability and Automobile Liability policies. These requirements shall be clearly stated in the remarks section on the firm's Certificate of Insurance. Insurance shall be written with insurance carriers approved in the State of Connecticut and with a minimum Best's Rating of A-VIII with all policies written on an occurrence form basis. In addition, all carriers are subject to approval by the Town. Minimum Limits and requirements are stated below: Workers' Compensation Insurance: • Statutory Coverage • Employer's Liability • \$1,000,000 each accident • A waiver of subrogation shall be provided in favor of the Town and its employees and agents Commercial General Liability: • Including premises and operations, products and completed operations, personal and advertising injury, contractual liability and independent contractors • Limits of liability for bodily injury and building damage • Each occurrence \$1,000,000 • Aggregate \$2,000,000 (aggregate limit shall apply separately to each job) • A waiver of subrogation shall be provided in favor of the Town and its employees and agents Automobile Insurance: • Including all owned, hired, borrowed and non-owned vehicles • Evidence of a combined single limit of liability for bodily injury and property • A waiver of Subrogation shall be provided in favor of the Town and its employees and agents Error and Omission Liability or Professional Services Liability Policy • Provide errors and omission liability or professional services liability policy for a minimum limit of liability \$5,000,000 each occurrence or per claim. The awarded firm(s) will be responsible to provide written notice to the owner 30 days prior to cancellation of any insurance policy. • The firm agrees to maintain continuous professional liability coverage for the entire duration of the engagement, and shall provide for an extended reporting period in which to report claims for seven (7) years following the conclusion of the project. The firm shall provide a Certificate of Insurance as evidence of General Liability, Auto Liability including all owned, hired, borrowed and non-owned vehicles, statutory Worker's Compensation and Employer's Liability and Professional Services Liability coverage.

The firm shall direct its Insurer to provide a Certificate of Insurance to the Town before any work is performed. For other than non-payment of premium, each insurance policy required by this RFP shall be endorsed to state that coverage shall not be suspended, voided, cancelled, or reduced in coverage or in limits except after thirty (30) days prior written notice has been given to the Town. Ten (10) days prior written notice shall be given for non-payment of premium. The Certificate shall evidence all required coverages including the Additional Insured on the General Liability and Auto Liability policies and Waiver of Subrogation on the General Liability, Auto Liability and Workers Compensation policies. The firm shall provide the Town copies of any such insurance policies upon request.

(f.) The selected firm must meet all Municipal, State, and Federal affirmative action and equal employment opportunity practices. The Town of Bethany is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer. Minority/Women/Disadvantaged Business Enterprises are encouraged to submit a proposal.

Town Residents' concerns include:²

1. Why did the state police investigation take 18 months until arrests were made and the public became aware of the allegations?
2. Why didn't the school and the town notify parents of the initial information about a complaint to DCF about a person working in the school and the after-school program?
3. Did town and school officials receive additional information after December 2022 about the allegations such as that the complaint was about sexual abuse, that more than one minor victim was involved, and that DCF had referred the case to the state police for criminal investigation? If so, which officials received additional information and when was it received? If additional information was received, why didn't the school and the town notify parents of this information?
4. What policies, procedures, protocols, training, and practices related to sexual abuse were in place in the Parks and Recreation Department prior to December 2022?
5. What policies, procedures, protocols, training and practices related to the care of children were in place in the Park and Recreation Department after December 2022?
6. Who took training classes and when? What employees – whether they be per diem, seasonal, part-time or full time and exactly what training during all relevant time periods?
7. What changes to policies, procedures, training, and practices related to sexual abuse were made by the Parks and Recreation Department after becoming aware of the DCF complaint and after any additional information about the allegations was received? Exactly when did the Park and Recreation Department make those changes, if any? At whose suggestion were these changes made? Who implemented those changes, if anyone?
8. Are additional changes to policies, procedures, training, and practices related to sexual abuse recommended to reduce the risk of similar incidents occurring at the Parks and Recreation Department in the future?

² See also Attachment B, "Town Residents' Concerns"

9. What was the role of the Park and Recreation Commission prior to December 2022? Was the Park and Recreation Department notified about the allegation made against Anthony Mastrangelo? When did the Park and Recreation Commission meet? Who were the members of the Park and Recreation Commission? What was their tenure? Mission? Role? Hire and fire? Meet with First Selectwoman? Meet with Director of Park and Recreation? Oversight? Something else?