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Board of Directors
Chattanooga Public Library
1001 Broad Street
Chattanooga, TN 37402

Re: (from the auditor's report)>> *Ms. Backus acknowledged submitting false time records, deleted relevant information after it was requested by the auditor and made false statements to the auditors.*

On the first day of my employment (9/24/12), I asked our personnel officer how to handle anticipated long or early/late hours associated with IT work. He struggled to answer my questions. In past practice, the library had honored the 40-hour work week and allowed comp time to accumulate, even for exempt employees. Exempt employees in the *city* do not earn comp time, but the library had not completely transitioned into a city department and had not adopted city personnel policies.

I was instructed to record a set, regular schedule, for example 9am-6pm, Monday through Friday. Any hours worked beyond that schedule could be compensatory time managed between my direct supervisor, Assistant Director Nate Hill and me.

Mr. Hill explicitly stated that he did not want to concern himself with my schedule, that he trusted me to manage my time and my work. My timesheets reflected compliance with these instructions. I did in fact keep track of my time independently—I kept a running tally and communicated with my supervisor any time I planned to use earned comp time. This accounts for the "false time records" cited in the audit report. All undocumented leave reported in the audit for me is explained by this use of compensatory time, which was not defined in library policy or procedure, but was sanctioned by my immediate supervisor.

When asked about leave time by the auditors, I realized that, in the absence of up-to-date policy or written procedure, there was nothing to support the autonomy I was given. However, I can state without hesitation or doubt that I worked for every hour I was ever paid, and I knew those who worked with me knew my commitment and work ethic.

The work we were doing to transform the Chattanooga Public Library into one of the most exciting, cutting-edge libraries in the world was heady stuff, and we may have worked more in the style of an innovative startup than in the more structured style of a municipal department. Library Director Corinne Hill acknowledges this openly, and credits the great success of the library to a more flexible management style. In an interview with Library Journal (January 7, 2014) she said, "I didn't want to come here

and work the way I've worked in other libraries," she says. "I didn't want that structured, bureaucratic environment where you couldn't make anything happen...."

This was a choice by the library's administration, and the results brought credit to the library and its board of trustees, and to the city of Chattanooga. My work contributed to that success.

My subsequent actions were misguided, and in retrospect, naïve. I was questioned, alone and unadvised, in an interview where I felt uncertain and afraid. I saw immediately that our improvised system—developed in the absence of an up-to-date board-approved policy or clear procedures—would not satisfy the auditors, and I knew that it would reflect badly not just on me, but on the library's administration. I knew that there was no material wrong-doing, no fraud was intended or committed, and I put myself in a position to take the blame for careless management practices. I behaved protectively of a system that had failed to create any protections for me.

Under pressure, I agreed to submit my resignation prior to the start of the special board meeting on September 5. In doing this I forfeited my chance to explain myself as well as my right to due process. I had requested that the board be given a more full account of my situation or to have an advocate offer explanation so that the board could operate from a position of information, but this was refused. Seeing no good alternative, I resigned with the commitment of a 60-day notice period which would give me some time to find a new position.

On the morning of Sept 5th, before submitting my letter of resignation, I confirmed that Director Corinne Hill had approval from the city's legal department to receive a resignation with notice. She agreed, stating that a resignation date of Oct 31st would let me complete or transition several important projects. Ms. Hill formally accepted my letter of resignation which stipulated 60 days' notice. When on Sept 8th she then retracted the terms and made my resignation effective immediately, that undermined the entire premise for my decision.

Thank you for your willingness to listen and consider my perspective.



Meg Backus