



SCHUYLKILL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Union Station
1 Progress Circle, Suite 201
Pottsville, PA 17901-3085

570-622-1942/800-755-1942
Fax: 570-622-1638
www.schuylkillchamber.com

July 6, 2021

Schuylkill County Commissioner George Halcovage
401 North 2nd Street
Pottsville, PA 17901

Dear County Commissioner George Halcovage:

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, this letter by the undersigned members of the Executive Committee of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce, acting on behalf of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce, wish to inform you of the following.

At the July 1, 2021 Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee Meeting of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Executive Committee reviewed the serious and concerning feedback received by members of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors following the Schuylkill Leadership Class dedication event at the Tamaqua Library commemorating the Schuylkill Leadership Class of 2021, Class Project via a Ribbon Cutting. At that event, presiding over the ceremony, Robert S. Carl, Jr., President and CEO of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce, chose to call on you for public comments following remarks by Board of Commissioners Chairman, Barron Hetherington, and preceding a written statement provided by Commissioner Gary Hess. The Chamber was not made aware that you planned to attend, and with notice would have been able to make a proactive decision. However, because your presence occurred without notification, even though the Chamber routinely requests confirmation from our public officials, our President and CEO was faced to make an immediate, on the spot decision to call on and offer opportunity for remarks at the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. We support his immediate decision, however, the feedback that we received following the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony dictated our deliberation on this matter at our Executive Committee meeting on July 1, 2021.

After the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony held at the Tamaqua Public Library, the president and CEO of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce, Robert S. Carl, Jr., received multiple phone calls and emails pertaining to your presence at the event and ability to offer public comments. This has actually happened on numerous occasions after events that you are present at, and invited to offer public comments.

The Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce wants to assure you that we believe in “innocent until proven guilty,” and therefore, the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce is not judging your current allegations.



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However, the federal and state laws make it clear that sexual harassment and sexual assault by the development of laws is a zero-tolerance offense. Therefore, your current situation is compromising in nature both to yourself and to your presence and participation in Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce events. Further complicating this situation, is the fact that the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce represents 767 members of diverse size and nature, including businesses and nonprofits. Some of our members represent assault victims, victims of sexual assault and harassment, and offer programs services and support to educate our community about sexual assault and harassment. This causes the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce, who has always prided itself in representing all of our members to the best of our ability, to thoroughly review and reflect on any critical or constructive criticism we receive. In this case, those reflections and reviews by our Chamber Executive Committee caused us to develop action steps to be considered by our Board of Directors. These possible actions had been considered in the past, but with significant recent criticism of the Chamber's permission to let you address the public through public comments at our Schuylkill Chamber events, the following has been structured to be brought to your attention. As a public official, elected by the constituents of Schuylkill County, we truly hope and trust you will review and understand the following decisions, and comply, for what we believe is in your and the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce's best interests.

The following has been endorsed by a majority of the members of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and remains in effect until a final determination of these allegations have been determined by a court of law or your pending case and allegations disposed of in some other means:

You are hereby being given formal notice in writing that you will not be allowed to appear at any private events of the Chamber and if you chose to do so, you will not be recognized, allowed to speak, and be respectfully asked to leave.

You are also hereby being given formal notice in writing that if you appear at a public event sponsored by the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce, understanding that we have no authority over attendance at public places, you will not be recognized or called upon to speak or included in any public picture taken, intended for the use by the media invited or in any publication developed or within the authority and control of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce.

We sincerely regret the need to both make this decision, provide this notice, and continue to insulate the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce from reactions related to your presence. We are taking this action, because to not take it, is perceived as placing some of our members in compromised positions, some very counter to their business or nonprofit missions, values and beliefs. These actions also need to be put in place in support for all victims of sexual assault and harassment. We find it unfortunate that as a public official, you have not felt the need to consider the well-being of others and how your presence at past and future events might be negatively perceived.



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These actions will be taken effective immediately upon your receipt of this notification. We will continue to assure the representation of the Schuylkill County Board of Commissioners and through consultation with the Commissioner Board Chair and through his leadership decide how and through whom the Schuylkill County Commissioners will continue to be represented.

We hope and trust all related matters to this current situation can be resolved in a very timely manner. The Vision and Mission of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce must be respected and on behalf of 767 current Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce members, we take this action with the utmost deliberation and consideration.

This action on behalf of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors is undertaken by the members of the Executive Committee of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, via the undersigned members of the Schuylkill Chamber of Commerce Executive Committee.

Sincerely,

Mark Wiederhold

Kim Lorimer

Cynthia Mensch

Jamie Barton

Savas Logothetides

Michelle Lewandowski

Pete Keitsock

Shannon Brennan

Cc: Schuylkill County Commissioner Chair, Barron Hetherington
Schuylkill County Commissioner Gary Hess
Schuylkill County Administrator Gary Bender
Schuylkill County Solicitor Glenn Roth
Schuylkill County Chief Clerk Linda Deatrach