



May 7, 2024

TO: Mayor Daniel Parra
Mayor Pro Tem Mejia
Councilmember Gill
Councilmember Hammer
Councilmember Kazarian

FROM: Wilma Tucker, City Manager

SUBJECT: Notice of Resignation

Pursuant to Section 12 of my employment agreement, dated February 16, 2021, this memo shall serve as written notice to resign from my position as City Manager. My last day of employment will be Monday, July 8, 2024, fulfilling the terms outlined in my agreement giving at least sixty (60) days prior written notice.

It has been an honor to serve the City of Fowler as City Manager for over three years, but the joy is gone. I know, with the help of my team, I am leaving this organization better than I found it and am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish together during my tenure. With your support, we have built an amazing executive team; were awarded over \$16 million in grants and earmarks for numerous capital projects that will change the City's landscape; have completed audits for 4 fiscal years (FY18-FY22) and presented 4 balanced budgets (FY22-FY25); we have established reserves and are earning interest income on numerous investments; we have created process where there was none; and the City finally has a full-time professionally staffed fire department. In addition, we have identified and addressed antiquated processes or procedures in every department. By all measures, we have had a very successful administration, and I could not be prouder of the department heads who have led their staff to advance the City. In addition, our City employees serve this community with their hearts and it has been an absolute pleasure to lead them.

This is a far cry from the mess that I inherited when I accepted the job offer. The City lacked balanced books and audited financials, had little to no process for the most basic things, departments had archaic processes and vulnerabilities, and a volunteer fire department that was a huge liability to the City. In short, the City lacked professional management. Fowler's reputation before I got here was tainted with happenings of the former City Manager who actually did misappropriate City funds, a felony. My job was to help change the City's reputation. We were making progress towards that however everything changed in October with the egregious assault allegation, the embarrassing Sherriff's investigation, and the excessive attempts from one resident to go to the media in an attempt to draw attention to their false narrative.

This decision did not come lightly and is significantly earlier than I desired, but my professional reputation and safety is of the utmost importance. At this point in my career, I no longer enjoy or feel safe coming to the City to do my job. As you all know, I have been berated at every Council meeting since October with very little defense from the Council publicly. I am the first to admit that I have thick skin but enough is enough. I appreciate everyone's first amendment rights but in my opinion the line has been blurred with no end in sight. I have had false criminal allegations filed against me, I have been investigated by law enforcement, I have been accused of nepotism and cronyism in hiring, of conducting a self-serving classification and compensation study, etc., etc., etc. The list goes on and on and on and none of it is true. Suffice it to say, I have had enough.

In our jobs as governmental officials, we will never make every one of our constituents happy. However, I can tell you that during my time in Fowler, my team has attempted to professionalize this organization and has brought much needed resources into this community. We have attempted to be the epitome of a transparent organization. I understand that members of the public are entitled to question policies and procedures, but their current methodology isn't sustainable and is consuming valuable limited resources. Since September, we've had one individual submit over 70 public records act requests, again, with no end in sight. Instead of being open to our responses to their countless inquiries, they have resorted to constant inquiries into my integrity and professional attacks that seem to have no end, all of which is more drama than I personally care to contend with and have decided that it is best that I remove myself as one of their targets. With the upcoming Council election, I do not care to be part of the fodder. I have worked too hard on my professional reputation and am anxious to remove myself from the drama that I am sure will continue in this community.

After our last Council meeting, I found myself apologizing to the professional construction management firm that Council unanimously supported to oversee the construction of the police headquarters and senior center after they sat through the public's comments. I understand another Councilmember also felt an apology was owed to the developer that presented the proposed project on the west side of SR 99, who also witnessed the unruliness that ensued at the last meeting. That evening, it became clear that staff and I can only do so much to professionalize the organization. That is yet another reason why I have decided it's best to resign.

I have a handful of staff who also feel stress and anxiety at work. They are reluctant to have their names on memos, staff reports, or emails for fear they may be targeted, for fear they will be accused of a crime they didn't commit. This City is poised to lose very talented staff because of the toxicity we've all witnessed this last year.

I often hear from members of the community about how supportive they are of me and my team and the work that we are doing. They have indicated that they are finally seeing a positive trajectory in the City and are impressed with the professional caliber of our staff. However, many of them are afraid to speak up at Council meetings to show their support for fear that they, their families, or their businesses will be the target of the hate that resides in the community, a common thread in today's society. I hope that my stepping down from my role encourages these residents and business owners to be more vocal to support the work the City is doing. I hope the voices of these supporters become louder than those of the few naysayers. I pray that the positive within this community comes forward to publicly praise and support the next City Manager and their executive team for the tireless work they do for

the City. I pray that Council publicly and vigorously supports future staff and sets the record straight when needed.

Looking back, I think I tackled every issue with professionalism and grace...including the embarrassing Sherrif's investigation I was forced to endure. I decided to grin and bear it as I had a job to do, but now that we have presented the FY25 budget I think it is the perfect time to submit this resignation. I am truly blessed that I can retire from my position in Fowler and put my husband first. He deserves celebration after attending every Council meeting since October to oversee my wellbeing and safety.

Over the next few months, I will work closely with my executive team to ensure that everything that I am working on is transitioned accordingly. I ask that you each meet with me individually to conduct an exit interview. I would implore this Council and community to consider our Assistant City Manager, Thomas Gaffery, as my replacement as it is the best way to ensure the work of this administration stays on track. He will see to it and is more than capable of doing the job... assuming he's even willing to do it at this point.

In closing, I can rise above all the noise and recognize that we all want the same for this community. I was leading a team poised to make it all happen but now it's up to every one of you. The supporters in Fowler need to have courage and louder voices. It's time for you all to stand united and tall, and speak louder than the cynics who I am sure will continue to spew their false narrative. The community deserves it.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve. I wish you all well and look forward to seeing from afar the fruits of our labor come to fruition in the days ahead.