

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**May 22, 2023**

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The following statement is issued from the St. Johns City Commission in response to allegations issued by Ms. Roberta Cocco, former mayor.

Since Roberta Cocco's resignation from the St. Johns City Commission on April 24, 2023, she has claimed that she experienced resistance and hostility during her six months as mayor. She claims there was a lack of support and transparency from City staff and other Commissioners, and she asserts that staff lacked oversight and leadership from the Commission. She further accuses City staff of demeaning her publicly and privately, among other grievances.

We respect Ms. Cocco's right to share her perceptions of her time as mayor. Some of her statements, however, do a disservice to the residents of St. Johns because they contain significant misinformation. We would like to take this opportunity to provide additional context.

Ms. Cocco has stated that Kristina Kinde, treasurer and interim city manager, should be reprimanded or removed for using "profane and obscene language" at a City Commission meeting on April 4, 2023. She states that a community member in attendance brought this to her attention and that other community members have corroborated the claim. We did receive one complaint and reviewed the video of the meeting. Ms. Kinde can be heard clearly throughout the meeting, but at no time was there any profane language. Further, no member of the public, City staff or Commission reacted in any way that would indicate any kind of disruption or profane language from Ms. Kinde.

Ms. Cocco also asserts that Ms. Kinde "gave herself an uncontested 5% raise." In fact, the former city manager recommended a 5% pay increase, effective July 1, 2023, for all director-level staff. It was discussed at the Commission's personnel committee meeting on February 16, 2023. As a member of that committee, Ms. Cocco was present for the meeting and raised no questions or objections.

The Commissioners stand in support of Ms. Kinde. Through a challenging time that has included adversarial demands, accusations of insubordination, and allegations of improper behavior, Ms. Kinde has remained

committed to her job duties and performed them with professionalism. We have no intention of reprimanding or removing a City employee based on unsubstantiated rumor and accusation.

Ms. Cocco also asserts that she resigned her position in part because she could not achieve a majority amongst the Commissioners. In reality, she was elected by a majority vote and frequently had support from the other commissioners. At the April 4, 2023 Special Meeting, Ms. Cocco, Vice Mayor Scott Dzurka and Commissioner Brad Gurski all voted not to purchase City office space in the Wilson Center, passing that motion and scaling back the scope of the Wilson Center project. All four Commissioners present at the March 20, 2023 City Commission meeting voted to change the make-up of the Communications Ad Hoc Advisory Group, at the suggestion of Ms. Cocco. These are just two examples out of many that show Ms. Cocco often received majority support from the Commission. In fact, meeting minutes show only one instance where Ms. Cocco was outvoted on a motion.

Ms. Cocco has expressed strong opinions about the Wilson Center, a project that has garnered much community and media attention. In response to requests for more clarity and transparency around the project, we are adding a dedicated [Wilson Center page](#) to our website. We encourage everyone to review the information and submit additional questions. While some of Ms. Cocco's perspectives may be valid, others rely on partial information.

As elected officials, we are bound by a certain amount of decorum and will not attempt to address each of Ms. Cocco's grievances. But when she continues to accuse our staff of actions that did not occur, paint a picture that she had no support from the other Commissioners, or influence community information with incomplete information, we feel compelled to provide residents with the facts. We are honored by the trust placed in us by St. Johns residents and pledge to do our very best to represent them well.