

Council Clerk Joanne Monaco,

Today 5/27/2020 effective immediately, I resign from the Council-at-Large I seat, Willoughby Hills City Council. Although my family and I are distraught by the continued meanness and infighting in City Hall, we love our home in Willoughby Hills and ask God to bless our community in these trying times.

It is with a heavy heart and much emotion that I send in my resignation today for the Council-at-Large I seat. I was appointed to this position last December to finish the two years remaining when Councilman John Plecnik resigned to successfully run for State office.

I grew up in Willoughby Hills and spent almost my entire life here--more than 55 years. I raised my five children here, and my grandchildren have gone to school in Willoughby Hills. In total, I served the city as councilperson for the last four and a half years. During that time I have done my best to learn all that I can about the way our local government works. I've spent countless hours reading, researching, asking questions, responding to resident concerns via phone and email, and learning the rules and procedures of city council proceedings. I've served on committees, worked to help lower sewer fees, consistently voted to support our police and fire personnel, and volunteered as trustee for the Chagrin River Watershed Partners. Some of you welcomed me to your home with the Watershed Partner project managers to see first hand what your flooding or erosion issues were. It's been an education that I don't regret.

Unfortunately, there has been a dark side for those who speak up and challenge the status quo in Willoughby Hills City Hall. Our past Mayor was constantly in the news for a number of very bad moves, not the least of which involved several attempts to sue and remove council members from their elected positions for voting against the Mayor's deficit budget. For years, I have done my best to deal with the threats and bullying from the past Mayor,

his administration, and even from fellow council colleagues. Truthfully, the venom and nastiness in City Hall literally makes me cry.

I had hoped things would change with a new Mayor, because Mayor Andy Gardner and his ticket campaigned with the promise of "working together." Unfortunately, Mayor Gardner has continued his predecessor's tradition of demeaning and threatening any Council Member who dares to disagree with him. Yes, I have been a dissenting vote. I voted against the Mayor's budget this year, because it spends nearly a million dollars more than last year, when our revenue is bound to decrease due to COVID-19. I voted against the Mayor Andy Gardner's proposal to increase garbage fees, because my neighbors told me they could not afford it. I hoped my dissent would be respected, even if my colleagues chose not to listen, but the bullying in City Hall and retaliation has only gotten worse. Mayor Gardner was very disparaging at Council meetings when I asked questions or provided a different perspective, and following his lead, a handful of his supporters harrassed me mercilessly. I can't even begin to share how much all of this has hurt my family and close friends.

I am now the second councilperson to resign this year citing concerns of litigation and threats as the reason. In addition, City Hall continues to take a direction that is diametrically opposed to my values as a Christian and a resident. It concerns me that the litigious atmosphere will make it imposible to find quality individuals willing to risk their reputation to serve in their local government here in Willoughby Hills. It does not matter if you win the election. If you vote against Mayor Gardner and Council President Chris Hallum, they will stop at nothing to remove you or bully you until your family asks you to resign for your own personal safety.

As of today, I am just a resident. And yes, I know that our voices as residents are seldom heard in the hyper-political environment of Willoughby Hills City Hall. But I do hope someone is listening. People like Mayor Gardner and Council President Hallum continue the infamous tradition of neverending fighting and controversy in City Hall. We need a real change in City Hall, and from this day forward as a resident and homeowner, I will be

praying for that change at my church in Willoughby Hills.

Sincerely,

*Janet Majka*

55+ year resident

2939 Bishop Rd.