

Election Interference (Part 6): Sequenced Emails Raise Questions of Election Integrity and Mohrig's Personal Ethics

Following is the sequence of events following the dissemination of an email invitation (on September 5th) from Council Member Rick Mohrig for a “strategic planning” meeting to be held at the home of 2 poll workers. Despite a total of 4 requests from Council Member Cookerly and from City Manager Krokoff, Council Member **Rick Mohrig has refused to answer a simple yes/no question about whether he attended the meeting with poll workers that was the subject of the email invitation. This question is plainly dispositive in determining whether a computer hack has occurred.** Rather Mohrig engages in transparent evasiveness and casts himself as a victim. I urge citizens to read the following email exchange and honestly **ask yourself whether Council Member Mohrig is fit to serve on council.**

On September 5, 2023, the following calendar invitation was sent by Rick Mohrig. The invitation references a **planning meeting on September 7th at the home of two poll workers,** giving a location and start/stop times. Considering his long history of egregious election interference, **you would think Mohrig would want to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. The optics of such a meeting are certainly awful,** to say the least.

From: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>; Laura Bentley <laura.bentley@cityofmiltonga.us>; Joe Longoria <Joe.Longoria@cityofmiltonga.us>; Sarah LaDart <sarah.ladart@cityofmiltonga.us>; Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>; Elected Officials <electedofficials@miltonga.gov>; Michelle Kennedy <MKennedy@berrydunn.com>; Greg Botelho <greg.botelho@miltonga.gov>; Carol Cookerly <carol.cookerly@miltonga.gov>; Stacey Inglis <stacey.inglis@miltonga.gov>; Paul Moore <paul.moore@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 5, 2023 10:40 PM (UTC-04:00)

SAVE THE DATE

Subject: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
Location: Muldowney's Home, Crooked Creek
Start: Thu 9/7/2023 6:30 PM
End: Thu 9/7/2023 9:30 PM
Show Time As: Tentative
Recurrence: (none)
Meeting Status: Not yet responded
Organizer: Rick Mohrig

SAVE THE DATE

Upon being questioned about this invitation by fellow council members, **Mohrig responded that he was hacked and that the subject meeting invitation was not from him and that he had nothing to do with it. He demands an investigation.** The most logical explanation is that Mohrig did not know what he was doing, likely used another meeting invitation as a template,

and mistakenly sent a meeting invitation for an actual meeting. When called out about it, Mohrig seems to have panicked and sent a **defensive, over-the-top denial of any wrongdoing**. There are **2 issues here**. **One is his use of city resources—his city email and city-provided tablet—for political purposes, which he knows is an ethics violation**. **Second and more serious is an implied meeting with (at least two) poll workers** (a clerk and a tabulator), who have since resigned from their positions.

From: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Re: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>; Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>; Greg Botelho <greg.botelho@miltonga.gov>; Carol Cookerly <carol.cookerly@miltonga.gov>; Stacey Inglis <stacey.inglis@miltonga.gov>; Paul Moore <paul.moore@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Ashley Smith <ashley.smith@miltonga.gov>; Elected Officials <electedofficials@miltonga.gov>; Ken Jarrard <kjarrard@jarrard-davis.com>
Sent: September 6, 2023 7:10 AM (UTC-04:00)

Steve & Ashley,

It appears **someone may have hacked my City E-Mail**. Can you please trace this and find out the origination? What do I and the City need to do to protect my account, the City Server, and fix this?

My apologies to those of you who received the hacked e-mail. **This was not from me nor do I have any idea what the subject meeting invite is about**. It references a Strategic Meeting with Berry Dunn Consultants and Michelle Kennedy from Berry & Dunn was in the send to addresses. **Again, this did not come from me, Councilman Rick Mohrig**. I was unaware of the e-mail as it only appears in my Sent file when I searched for it after others, obviously confused by the note, started replying. Please disregard.

It did not show up as an e-mail in my inbox, even though the sender tried sending it to "Elected Officials" (which would have automatically sent a copy to my inbox from me and to Juliette Johnson, Andrea Verhoff & Jan Jacobus as well as all of active Counsel).

It also was addressed to former City Employees (Sara LaDart) and former City Council Members (Laura Bentley and Joe Longoria) at the old City Domain name of "cityofmiltonga.us".

My default City signature tag line & logo are also missing, which is automatically added on all true e-mails originating from me on the City Server. I only became aware of this bogus e-mail when people on this e-mail string with correct e-mails started replying to this early this morning. I did find a copy of the falsified e-mail in my SENT e-mail folder.

Please let me know what you & I can do to fix whatever breach has occurred and how we can trace the source and origination of this person pretending to be me. I and the City cannot afford to have someone impersonating an **Elected Official in communications originating from the City Server**. I look forward to hearing what we can do to correct this quickly. If this happened to me, it can happen to other City Officials and employees.

Thanks in advance for your assistance.

As requested, City Manager Krokoff conducts an investigation that ties up the City's two information technology specialists for the better part of a day. **No "unauthorized access" is found.**

From: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>
Subject: RE: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>; Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>; Greg Botelho <greg.botelho@miltonga.gov>; Carol Cookerly <carol.cookerly@miltonga.gov>; Stacey Inglis <stacey.inglis@miltonga.gov>; Paul Moore <paul.moore@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Ashley Smith <ashley.smith@miltonga.gov>; Elected Officials <electedofficials@miltonga.gov>; Ken Jarrard <kjarrard@jarrard-davis.com>
Sent: September 6, 2023 5:45 PM (UTC-04:00)

Ashley and our security team have been working all day on this and there does not appear to be unauthorized access into our system. We'll continue to investigate.

I infer that **Mohrig continues to insist he has been hacked and drops off his computer for IT to scan for security issues.** These scans **burn another 2-3 days, further expending city resources** in what I and other believe was a wild goose chase . . . or perhaps Mohrig is just stalling for time.

From: Ashley Smith <ashley.smith@miltonga.gov>
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2023 9:11:14 AM
To: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>
Subject: City of Milton Microsoft Surface Tablet

Councilman Mohrig,

Please let me know when you will be able to drop off your city issued Microsoft Surface tablet so we can run some security scans on it. It should only take 2-3 days for the security team to do what is needed and we'll have it right back to you probably by next Thursday at the very latest. If you drop it off today you can leave it with me, and if I'm not available then just drop it in my office, or with David Frizzell, or anyone on the City Management team. I appreciate your help with this and hopefully we will get everything wrapped up quickly. Have a great weekend!

Mohrig checks in with IT to confirm the specialists received his computer.

From: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Re: City of Milton Microsoft Surface Tablet
To: Ashley Smith <ashley.smith@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 8, 2023 5:29 PM (UTC-04:00)

Ashley,
Just getting caught up on e-mail since we got my new password loaded.

I want to confirm (for Steve) that you have my tablet that I dropped off earlier today. Please let me know if you need anything additional from me.

Thanks again, Ashley, for your help in securing my City e-mail.

On September 11th, clearly annoyed by Mohrig's meeting with poll workers in the midst of a political campaign, Council Member **Cookerly engages Mohrig and asks the obvious important question: "Did you meet with them?"** Them being the poll workers.

From: Carol Cookerly <carol.cookerly@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Re: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>; Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>; Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>; Paul Moore <paul.moore@miltonga.gov>; Juliette Johnson <Juliette.Johnson@miltonga.gov>; Andrea Verhoff <Andrea.Verhoff@miltonga.gov>; Jan Jacobus <jan.jacobus@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Elected Officials <electedofficials@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 11, 2023 10:59 AM (UTC-04:00)

Rick and all - With our family and work situations last week I'm circling back to Milton. This is a bit hard to follow and I'm wondering what's the latest.

I would think that meeting with poll workers would be out of bounds during an election - at the very least the optics would be horrific. So what happened did you meet with them?

Mohrig does not respond, so a day later (September 12th), **Cookerly again asks**: "Did a meeting take place in Crooked Creek with poll workers?" and **further asks why** such a meeting would be held. Sensing Mohrig is evading the issue, **Cookerly states**: "I am not going to drop this."

From: Carol Cookerly <carol.cookerly@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Re: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>; Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>; Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>; Paul Moore <paul.moore@miltonga.gov>; Juliette Johnson <Juliette.Johnson@miltonga.gov>; Andrea Verhoff <Andrea.Verhoff@miltonga.gov>; Jan Jacobus <jan.jacobus@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Elected Officials <electedofficials@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 12, 2023 9:34 AM (UTC-04:00)

Council member Mohrig -

I wish you had answered me because your silence is creating alarm over election integrity.

Yesterday I asked a straightforward question: Did a meeting take place in Crooked Creek with poll workers?

It's important to know whether it did and if it did, why a meeting was held.

I'm not going to drop this. Please respond.

Finally, a full week after the original email invitation was sent, **Mohrig defensively responds with an transparently evasive answer**. He does not answer the simple yes/no question about whether the meeting occurred.

From: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Re: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Carol Cookerly <carol.cookerly@miltonga.gov>; Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>; Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>; Paul Moore <paul.moore@miltonga.gov>; Juliette Johnson <Juliette.Johnson@miltonga.gov>; Andrea Verhoff <Andrea.Verhoff@miltonga.gov>; Jan Jacobus <jan.jacobus@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Elected Officials <electedofficials@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 12, 2023 2:33 PM (UTC-04:00)

Carol and the rest copied on your attached e-mails:

The accusations you are making are false. I am not sure where the narrative is coming from.

As I stated initially, the original e-mail was not from me. Please disregard

Cookerly comes back again and rightfully asserts that Mohrig is engaged in obfuscation that she correctly states **only cause greater concern about election integrity**. **For the third time, Cookerly asks the same question** about whether the meeting with poll workers happened?

From: Carol Cookerly <carol.cookerly@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Re: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>; Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>; Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>; Paul Moore <paul.moore@miltonga.gov>; Juliette Johnson <Juliette.Johnson@miltonga.gov>; Andrea Verhoff <Andrea.Verhoff@miltonga.gov>; Jan Jacobus <jan.jacobus@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Elected Officials <electedofficials@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 12, 2023 3:18 PM (UTC-04:00)

Rick, I don't feel like playing cat and mouse. I am not making an accusation. I am asking questions.

By obfuscation, you are giving me greater concern about election integrity, not less.
So I'll ask one more time and please for the benefit to all on this thread answer clearly:

Did you or did you not have a meeting with the Muldowney's last Thursday at Crooked Creek?

A yes or no answer would be appreciated.

In the interim and before answering Cookerly, Mohrig requests an update on the hacking investigation from Krokoff. I would infer that Mohrig is holding out hope that some worm or virus might be found that might provide the semblance—however, thin—of an alibi.

From: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, September 13, 2023 6:41 AM
To: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>; Ashley Smith <ashley.smith@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!

Steve & Ashley,

Can you please give me an update on the investigation into the hacking of my City e-mail and someone sending the fake e-mail pretending to be me.

But alas, Krokoff informs Mohrig that “there is no evidence of a breach of our system” and regarding his tablet there is “no evidence of it being compromised.” Furthermore, Krokoff expresses skepticism about Mohrig’s hacking assertions. Krokoff ends his email by stating he will not authorize additional resources for the hacking investigation if Mohrig does not answer the question about whether he scheduled or attended a meeting with poll workers. Krokoff also seems fed-up with Mohrig’s evasiveness about the poll worker meeting.

From: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>
Subject: RE: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>; Ashley Smith <ashley.smith@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 13, 2023 7:17 AM (UTC-04:00)

Thank you for your patience, Councilmember Mohrig.

As I stated in my initial email, there is no evidence of a breach of our system. Our security team was completing an analysis of your tablet to ensure it wasn't compromised, and I believe that is complete with no evidence of it being compromised. To ensure transparency, I've instructed Ashley to coordinate with our security experts at InterDev to draft a report outlining their findings.

While I don't purport to be a cybersecurity expert, I have instructed a course on the topic for many years at the undergraduate level. In my experience, I can confidently state that the activity we observed does not align with typical malevolent actions aimed at gaining unauthorized network access. These usually involve phishing and social engineering techniques to coax users into divulging critical information such as logins and passwords, subsequently providing attackers with opportunities to access sensitive data or install ransomware.

Regarding the calendar invite in question, it appears to be a legitimate event originally created by Tammy Lowit in 2021 for our strategic planning efforts. The perplexing part is how it was subsequently edited to include the Muldowney's information and shifted to a meeting scheduled at their residence in Crooked Creek on Thursday, September 7, 2023. In the absence of further information, we might reasonably conclude that this could be attributed to user error.

However, if you have no connection to the Muldowneys and did not intend to schedule or attend a meeting as indicated in the calendar invite, we are open to exploring additional resources to investigate this matter further. On the other hand, if this meeting indeed represents an actual event, I must inform you that I cannot authorize any further allocation of resources to delve into the issue.

Once again, I appreciate your understanding and cooperation in this matter. If you have any further questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Considering there is zero evidence of hacking, **Mohrig chooses to shut down further discussion** with council. **For the fourth time** (he is asked 3 times by Cookerly and once by Krokoff), **Mohrig evades answering whether a meeting occurred** with poll workers. **He pathetically attempts to cast himself as the victim.** And he gives hints of a possible (lame) excuse in the event he must fess up that he met with poll workers. He **intimates that he might not have known the poll workers were actually . . . poll workers.**

From: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Re: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Carol Cookerly <carol.cookerly@miltonga.gov>; Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>; Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>; Paul Moore <paul.moore@miltonga.gov>; Juliette Johnson <Juliette.Johnson@miltonga.gov>; Andrea Verhoff <Andrea.Verhoff@miltonga.gov>; Jan Jacobus <jan.jacobus@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Elected Officials <electedofficials@miltonga.gov>; Ken Jarrard <kjarrard@jarrard-davis.com>
Sent: September 13, 2023 8:40 AM (UTC-04:00)

Carol,

This will be my last reply to you on this thread.

No one is playing “cat and mouse”, at least I am not. I find it troubling that you are making assumptions from an e-mail that I have clearly stated was not sent from me. I would think you would be concerned about the hack to my and the City’s e-mail system. Someone somehow infiltrated the City Server and my e-mail to create and send a fake e-mail pretending to be me. I clearly stated that when I forwarded the e-mail with my comments to Steve, our Director of IT and Council the morning after the impersonated e-mail was sent.

In that e-mail, I explained the incident that occurred and requested an investigation as to find who perpetrated the hack. I will not discuss the investigation in open e-mails to all of Council. It should be of concern to you and Council that the same thing could have occurred or be done to you. It is a security breach issue that needs to be investigated.

As far as your stated concerns about the integrity of our future elections, I have full confidence in our City Manager (and Election Superintendent) that he and his staff will conduct a fair, secure and open Municipal election, just as in all past City of Milton Municipal Elections when Fulton County administered them.

Also, to clarify, I have never seen nor been made aware of any list of Poll Workers selected to administer our Election. Have you been provided a list of Poll Workers?

As for your implied accusations of inappropriate meetings or election interference, I have not been involved in the organization or planning of our local election, nor should ANY Council Member. That is the sole responsibility of the City Manager in our case. The outside accusations that occurred have been clearly debunked and corrected by our Legal Counsel’s Open letter last week to the State Elections Board in direct response to Attorney Brian Sells letter to the same Board dated August 22, 2023. I believe all of Council has been copied on both letters, but I will forward a copy of Mr. Jarrard’s letter to all of you in case you missed it.

I remain committed to serving the best interests of our community, and I trust that truth and justice will prevail.

Realizing she has Mohrig on the ropes, Cookerly goes in for the kill. Mohrig has nowhere to go. Cookerly’s arguments are airtight and irrefutable . . . and her delivery of a **series of knock-out punches** is masterful. Surely, the rest of council sees the writing on the wall.

From: Carol Cookerly <carol.cookerly@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Re: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>; Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>; Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>; Paul Moore <paul.moore@miltonga.gov>; Juliette Johnson <Juliette.Johnson@miltonga.gov>; Andrea Verhoff <Andrea.Verhoff@miltonga.gov>; Jan Jacobus <jan.jacobus@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Elected Officials <electedofficials@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 13, 2023 9:59 AM (UTC-04:00)

Ok, Rick. The pattern is clear. I ask a direct question and you redirect to being a victim. Each and every time.

Did you or did you not meet with the Muldowneys?

It's more important to know now with news the Muldowneys have resigned their positions. By reputation, they are fine people and obviously knowledgeable. If their decision is in any way related to this, you can trust there will be full disclosure so that every one gets the facts.

Here's what I think happened:

1. We got an email in which you had fumbled setting up a meeting with the Muldowneys by merging it with an old template for a different meeting.
2. You realized your mistake and wanted to cover it up. So you concocted the "I've been hacked" drama. At first read it sounded like bullshit but I didn't have time then to flag it.
3. You tied up staff time and police time and everybody's time with your ridiculous story. One email belonging to one random person hacked. Hilarious.
4. It was investigated. No one believes you.
5. I press with the core question, "Did you meet with the Muldowneys?" It's a fair question. Not because it's illegal but because you are trying to hide it. The optics are horrific but you and they apparently have the right to do so.
6. So I'll remind you once again - you brought this to our attention.
7. I have to ask and digress a bit — Why did you not simply follow up your rogue email with one that said, "hey all, I was trying to set up a meeting and I messed up the template - please ignore"
8. Certainly I would have taken pause you were meeting with poll workers but the transparency of said meeting would have been comforting.
9. Now I have no comfort.
10. After inappropriately dispatching staff to check on campaign sign violations, just 14 days or so later, you tie up staff time again with a hack story I believe you know is bogus.
11. You say that you trust truth and justice will prevail. I'd like to fast track that.
12. Mr. Krokoff - can you please investigate this situation? I want a direct answer to my simple question. Rick says I should be concerned whether a hack occurred. I am. Terribly. And the logical step toward that answer is knowing the answer to my question. It is important to know whether our systems are secure. It's also important to know whether staff time has been consumed to assist in what seems like a coverup - for whatever reason.
13. Please advise.

Council Member Juliette Johnson weighs in first and **correctly argues that Mohrig should get what he requested: a full investigation.** She expresses what most engaged citizens have been thinking and saying . . . that **Mohrig must finally be held accountable** for the many problems he has created at City Hall.

From: Juliette Johnson <Juliette.Johnson@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Carols email
To: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 13, 2023 2:26 PM (UTC-04:00)

Just wanted to let you know I am in full support of an investigation. This issue was brought to us by Rick, himself. I would hate to see it fade away with out repercussions like has happened with previous problems he has created.

Mayor Jamison seeks a majority of council's approval for an investigation in the matter. The mayor and council each have the authority to order such an investigation; however, the mayor seems reluctant to unilaterally order such an investigation without support of at least 3 additional council members. It seems the **mayor has majority support if Mohrig is counted as a "yes" vote.** Johnson and Cookerly both support such an investigation. However, as of my writing of this blog post, such an **investigation does not seem to have yet been ordered.**

Out of an abundance of caution and as a courtesy to Mohrig, **Mayor Jamison sends a separate email to Mohrig to verify that Mohrig does indeed desire an investigation.** (I would not have extended such a courtesy, but rather counted Mohrig as a "yes" vote considering that he has repeatedly called for an investigation.) As of this writing, Mohrig had not responded by email to the mayor's query.

From: Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Fw: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 13, 2023 2:58 PM (UTC-04:00)
FYI Did not want to reply all

From: Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, September 13, 2023 2:53 PM
To: Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Re: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!

Rick,

I believe myself and/or Council has the authority to ask for **an investigation into this alleged ordeal. Is this something you would like to proceed forward with?** Feel free to call me on my cell today. I'm on the road and will be available all day except from 5:30 - 7:30.

From: Peyton Jamison <peyton.jamison@miltonga.gov>
Subject: Re: Strategic Planning Session - Save the Date!
To: Carol Cookerly <carol.cookerly@miltonga.gov>; Rick Mohrig <rick.mohrig@miltonga.gov>; Steven Krokoff <steven.krokoff@miltonga.gov>; Paul Moore <paul.moore@miltonga.gov>; Juliette Johnson <Juliette.Johnson@miltonga.gov>; Andrea Verhoff <Andrea.Verhoff@miltonga.gov>; Jan Jacobus <jan.jacobus@miltonga.gov>
Cc: Elected Officials <electedofficials@miltonga.gov>
Sent: September 13, 2023 4:36 PM (UTC-04:00)

I appreciate everyone's comments. However, I don't feel that any more communication will be productive at this point. **I have heard from multiple council members today regarding this. The Charter does grant me the authority to investigate this further, but I will not authorize this unless I have Council support. Please email me directly or call me with your opinion.** Let's all refrain from any future communication on this email string.

Whether there will be an investigation and how it will be conducted is unclear as of the writing of this blog post. What is clear is that the issues here are serious and get to the heart of good governance. They involve **misuse of government resources; possible perjury; and possible election interference** (or at least the appearance thereof). **What a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive . . .**