

Dear Mr. Michelini:

Today, I write to express my sincere apology. Upon reflection of the events that have occurred since your first public records request to my office in August 2021, there is no justification for my initial reaction and the behavior that I since exhibited towards you. You, the City of Tampa, and those who voted to give me the opportunity to serve, deserved better. All citizens have the absolute right to learn about and promptly discover how elected officials (and all other government employees) discuss, communicate, and debate about matters of public concern. Rather than honor that fundamental right, I engaged in activities that were contrary to the spirit and intent of open government and transparency. I have now come to fully appreciate why the City of Tampa rightfully declined to provide me with representation, at taxpayer expense, in connection with the lawsuit that you filed against me.

You did not deserve the treatment and embarrassment that I caused you in connection with the legitimate public records requests you made to my office. And, as a public official, it was inappropriate and inexcusable for me to confront you outside City Council Chambers on September 2, 2021 in connection with those requests. Going forward, I will inform all who will listen that openness and transparency is the bedrock of public service, and remind my colleagues that public records requests should be taken seriously and promptly fulfilled. Nobody should be allowed to alter, delete, or destroy public records, and, based on this experience, I encourage all public officials to utilize only their publicly issued email accounts and devices to communicate about public matters.

Mr. Michelini, I cannot take back what occurred in the past. I do, however, believe that I should step away from public office, reflect upon these events, and ensure that my future behavior will comply with the highest ethical standards that we all expect of the residents living in the City of Tampa.

Sincerely,

*John Dingfelder*

John Dingfelder

03/11/2022