



Douglas A. Ducey
Governor

Craig Brown
Director

ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

100 NORTH FIFTEENTH AVENUE • SUITE 261
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007

(602) 542-5482

ARIZONA STATE PARKS FINAL REPORT ADMINISTRATIVE INQUIRY

January 4, 2016

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On December 17, 2015 [REDACTED] former Arizona State Parks [REDACTED], submitted a complaint via email to the Governor's Office of Constituent Services. [REDACTED] complaint alleges that she paid out-of-pocket expenses in the amount of \$400.00 for an Arizona State Parks web application, and then was subsequently laid off. Additionally, [REDACTED] provided a detailed verbal account of agency turnover and alleged abuse of power concerning Arizona State Parks Executive Director Sue Black.

[REDACTED] was hired at Arizona State Parks [REDACTED] 2014 as a [REDACTED]. Her job duties entailed [REDACTED]. In efforts to advance [REDACTED] career with the agency, she sought out a Mobile App developer whom she worked with to develop an Arizona State Parks App. [REDACTED] stated she used her own money to launch the App and then presented the App to executive management as an "innovative idea." [REDACTED] believes that "State Parks stole her innovative idea" that she presented to the organization in good faith.

[REDACTED] also claims the agency has undergone a lot of changes with the appointment of a new Executive Director, Sue Black, effective February 11, 2015. With the changes, [REDACTED] has witnessed high turnover, employees complaining of stress and executive staff having significant difficulty interpreting Ms. Black's orders and desires.

[REDACTED] also alleges that Ms. Black is "getting an 18% raise."

REQUESTED RESOLUTION

[REDACTED] has requested her employment with Arizona State Parks be reinstated and the workplace behaviors of the Executive Director be investigated.

ALLEGATIONS AND FINDINGS

Allegation:

██████████ alleges using \$400 of her own money for start-up costs associated with an Arizona State Parks App which she also alleges the agency subsequently stole. In retaliation, ██████████ believes she was then laid off.

Findings:

When interviewed, ██████████ indicated that after her supervisor, ██████████, retired in the summer of 2015 ██████████, by her own choice, sought out an independent App Developer due to her interest in presenting “an innovative idea” to market the State Parks organization on the internet. ██████████ negotiated the cost of the start-up fees of \$400.00 and paid those fees out of her personal funds. However, during ██████████ interview she indicated that the agency had subsequently purchased the rights of the Arizona State Parks App and the App developer then reimbursed her for the start-up cost, making her whole.

A request by Arizona State Parks was submitted to the Arizona Department of Administration in December for a layoff due to organizational and structural changes in the department where ██████████ was employed. This request was in compliance with R2-5A-1002 (B) Staff Reduction. A check with State Parks Human Resources revealed that ██████████ position title and number has been eliminated from the authorized headcount, in accordance with State personnel rules. However, there are other positions currently advertised for the agency that require a different and higher-level skill set than ██████████ possesses. This layoff was not done in a retaliatory manner, but was based on business need. ██████████ is currently eligible to apply for any open positions at any State agency.

Allegation:

██████████ alleges Executive Director Sue Black is “cleaning house” and that executive staff have/had a hard time interpreting Ms. Black’s desires and instructions.

Findings:

When interviewed, ██████████ indicated that numerous members of Ms. Black’s executive staff have left the agency due to the treatment by Ms. Black.

Corroborating this allegation, several exit interviews from former employees were reviewed. One former employee stated, “*Working at Arizona State Parks was an absolute nightmare. I was hired ██████████ as a ██████████ but the Executive Director tried to make me her Executive Assistant. I have never been berated, insulted or poorly treated in my life.*” Another former employee stated, “*Co-workers were great but morale was low because most lived in fear of Sue Black and the damage she did to the Dept. She is unethical and abusive.*”

The Arizona Department of Administration, Human Resources Division, has spoken to several employees who voiced similar concerns about Ms. Black over the past 11 months. One individual was in tears about the “inconsistent and rude” treatment she received from Ms. Black. She subsequently obtained a job offer from ██████████ and left the agency. Another employee alleged that Ms. Black asked staff to violate federal Family Medical Leave Act legislation. Two other callers remained anonymous, but complaints were related to Ms. Black’s leadership style and her behaviors being inconsistent, rude and demeaning to staff. One employee indicated, “*If you do a good job Sue Black yells at you in a condescending way; if you do a bad job you get the same thing. She says stuff like, ‘This is like explaining something to dumb and dumber.’*”

The agency, which has a head count of 274 employees, had 16 separations during 2015, five in 2014 and three in 2013.

SUMMARY

- *When interviewed, ██████████ confirmed that she was reimbursed for the \$400 start-up costs associated with the App she purchased and that Arizona State Parks did, in fact, pay for the rights of the App as their own intellectual property.*
- *██████████ lay-off was in compliance with State Personnel Rule R2-5A-1002 (B) and no retaliation was substantiated related to her separation.*
- *Arizona State Parks has had a significant increase in turnover for 2015.*
- *Exit interviews, 1:1 meetings with ADOA HR staff and phone complaints indicate some current and former employees have issues with Executive Director Sue Black’s management style and workplace behaviors and etiquette, as outlined in this complaint.*
- *State HRIS records indicate Ms. Black has not received an 18% raise or any increase in compensation since her initial start date in February 2015.*
- *Because A.R.S § 41-703 (5) outlines that the Director shall, “Employ, determine the conditions of employment and prescribe the duties and power of administrative, professional, technical, secretarial, clerical and other persons as may be necessary in the performance of the department’s duties and contract for the services of outside advisors, consultants and aides as may be reasonably necessary,” Sue Black, the agency head, is the only authority who could re-hire ██████████. Ms. Black has indicated through her Human Resources Manager she is not interested in re-employing ██████████ at this time.*

January 4, 2016

**FINAL REPORT – [REDACTED] – STATE PARKS
ADMINISTRATIVE INQUIRY**

Prepared by:

Hope Favela
Shared Services Officer
ADOA – Human Resources Division
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Reviewed by:

Jan Plank
Chief Human Resources Officer - Shared Services
ADOA – Human Resources Division
January 5, 2015