

[Updated] Commissioner Hack Claim Draws Concern

Above: Screenshots captured from Facebook.

Editor's Note: This story has been updated to include additional information obtained during the August 9 meeting of the Atchison County Commission.

(KAIR)--A law enforcement investigation will likely not happen, despite what an Atchison County Commissioner initially described as a “hack” involving his personal Facebook account.

That happened late last month, when a post, appearing to have originated from 3rd District County Commissioner Henry “Bill” Pohl, was made on a public Facebook page designed to focus on the August Second Atchison County Primary Election.

The post revealed what appeared to be confidential personnel information related to disciplinary action involving a county employee.

After the post drew criticism from other Facebook users, Pohl took to the social media platform saying he was leaving the group, and that the information was the result of a hack of his account.

In an emailed response to questions posed by MSC Radio News, Pohl says he contacted his son regarding the matter, who notified Facebook and removed Pohl from the group.

Additionally, Pohl says he contacted Atchison County IT Director Wes Lanter as soon as he was notified about the posts.

When asked by MSC News if he has suspicions regarding who might have been involved in the matter, if only a select few had access to the personnel information referenced in the offending Facebook post, Pohl stated that, while he “won’t point fingers at anybody” because he doesn’t have proof, he does “feel that someone in the Courthouse may have told someone for political gain.”

Following additional questions posed by MSC Radio News during the August 9th meeting of the Commission, the Commission maintained that a vote regarding the personnel disciplinary action was made in public, but the date of that meeting could not be immediately recalled during the open session. Additionally, the vote was apparently not recorded in the minutes of that past meeting, with County Clerk Pauline Lee saying she was advised by the County Counselor not to do so.

“I talked to Pat [Henderson] about it, about whether or not it should have been. He advised not to. You can always go back and correct your minutes.”

Prior to the meeting, MSC Radio News contacted Atchison County Sheriff Jack Laurie. Through email correspondence, Laurie says his office would investigate the alleged hack if Pohl, or the County Counselor, request that an investigation be conducted. However, Laurie says the allegation of the hack is of obvious concern, and could be investigated under Kansas law, adding that he believes the incident could “meet criteria of both felony and misdemeanor crimes” under state statute.

Atchison County Counselor Henderson confirms the communication between Pohl and Lanter, adding that the alleged hack involved only Pohl's Facebook account, and has no reason “to think that the County's computers or network were compromised.” He arrives at that conclusion because it was only Pohl's Facebook account that incurred the alleged hack, and that both Pohl and Lanter have informed him that no private County data was stored on Pohl's home computer, iPad, or phone, which Pohl uses to access Facebook.

Henderson says that if further information develops, it could be looked into; otherwise, he believes the matter to be closed.

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