



**FOR RELEASE ON
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Amidst Alleged Ethics & Charter Violations, Albion Mayor Retaliates with Frivolous Lawsuit

ALBION, Mich. – On the eve of a tough reelection campaign, Albion Mayor Dave Atchison is seeking to silence citizens concerned about his alleged violations of the city’s ethics code and city charter. Atchison has filed a civil lawsuit against Albion residents Sonya Brown and Garrett Brown—no relation—claiming defamation and harm to his private bed and breakfast business.

It was alleged that Atchison repeatedly failed to disclose that he was nominating campaign donors for appointment to city boards and commissions. The city’s ethics code requires that Atchison disclose financial interests, legal duties, or personal relationships “that may give the appearance of a conflict of interest.” The city created an ethics code for city council in 2018 to increase transparency and trust. Albion’s city charter requires the mayor and council members “deal with the administrative service of the city only through the city manager, as to officers and employees made responsible to him.” However, Atchison allegedly gave directives to city staff, as documented in emails obtained through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

Concerned citizens and former Albion elected officials Sonya Brown and Garrett Brown repeatedly raised concerns about Atchison’s potential violations through council comments, public comments, and written communications to the full council. Rather than clarify the legality of his actions with the city council and city attorney, Atchison hired a private attorney, Richard Lindsay, Jr., to file a civil lawsuit against Ms. Brown and Mr. Brown. Despite a global coronavirus pandemic and his racially inflammatory Facebook posts in April 2020 regarding the disproportionate amount of African American deaths due to COVID-19, Atchison claims the allegations by Sonya Brown and Garrett Brown, brought forth regarding his conduct as mayor, are the direct cause of decreased revenue for his private bed and breakfast business.

Divisiveness and turmoil have marked Atchison’s tenure as mayor; the city separated from two different city managers—most recently Darwin McClary, who, after less than a year of service, left with a separation agreement totaling an estimated \$61,200+, as reported by various outlets. In 2019, the city faced national scrutiny over the beating of a handcuffed Black adolescent by an Albion police officer.

In response, Sonya Brown and Garrett Brown have filed a counterclaim against Atchison alleging abuse of process. A copy of the Complaint, Answer and Counterclaims are available to the public at the Calhoun County Circuit Court.

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