

Fw: Request for Update - Debbie Howard

Ross Smith <ross@smithii.com>
Draft

Wed, Jun 10, 2026 at 2:58 PM

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From: Jenna Wallace <jwallace@co.lincoln.or.us>
Date: Mon, Jun 8, 2026 at 5:02 PM
Subject: Request for Update - Debbie Howard
To: Walter Chuck <wchuck@co.lincoln.or.us>, Casey Miller <clmiller@co.lincoln.or.us>
CC: David Collier <dcollier@co.lincoln.or.us>, [REDACTED]

Good Afternoon,

I am requesting an update regarding Ms. Howard's administrative leave and investigation.

As the elected official and department head of the Lincoln County District Attorney's Office, I have been repeatedly excluded from any decision regarding Ms. Howard over the past seven (7) months. I was not involved in the decision to place Ms. Howard on administrative leave. I was not given any notice that Human Resources was going to place Ms. Howard on administrative leave. As the appointing authority, I did not approve Ms. Howard being placed on administrative leave, as required by the Lincoln County Personnel Rules Article 11(H)(5). Additionally, all communication regarding Ms. Howard's leave and investigation was sent to Michael Thornicroft, Chief Deputy District Attorney, which I found to be odd given Mr. Thornicroft does not supervise Ms. Howard and does not have appointing authority over Ms. Howard.

Furthermore, Ms. Howard was placed on administrative leave two hundred thirty-eight (238) days ago on October 13, 2025, and has remained on administrative leave, over my objection, since that time. *See attached email.* I have not received any notice, explanation, or documented approval for Ms. Howard's administrative leave to be extended beyond the 30 calendar days mandated by Article 11(H)(5).

Recently, I was advised by a third party that findings had been made regarding the investigation into Ms. Howard's conduct. I disagree with many of the findings made by the investigator paid by Mr. Collier. Specifically relevant, I have had personal conversations with many individuals, including the heads of at least two law enforcement agencies in Lincoln County, who both expressed their opinion that Commissioner Claire Hall showed signs and symptoms associated with drug use, specifically a CNS stimulant like methamphetamine.

I also find the disproportioned treatment of Ms. Howard to be troubling, considering other county employees, including Commissioner Claire Hall, have made several public, defamatory and derogatory statements over the course of the last two years that were similar in nature to what Ms. Howard was alleged to have done and none of those individuals were investigated by Human Resources.

Without Board intervention, given Mr. Collier's past practice, I anticipate Ms. Howard will be terminated without any actual evidence supporting the County's allegations. This will likely be done without my consultation or approval, regardless of my status as the elected District Attorney and Department Head. **I want to be clear that I never approved Ms. Howard being placed on administrative leave. Additionally, I do not approve Ms. Howard being terminated.**

Mr. Collier has repeatedly demonstrated a clear bias against employees in the District Attorney's Office. Given the current circumstances, I do not understand how the County is allowing him to make personnel decisions in the District Attorney's Office. This investigation and subsequent findings appear to be retaliatory in nature, especially given Ms. Howard's involvement in the successful recall of Commissioner Claire Hall.

It is my request that Ms. Howard return to work immediately and resume her position in the District Attorney's Office as a Senior Legal Secretary.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.



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