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Board of County Commissioners end settlement negotiations after Clerk and Recorder Tracy K. Baker asks for week extension

The Board of County Commissioners Friday ended settlement negotiations that would have required Clerk and Recorder Tracy K. Baker to resign his post immediately in exchange for \$325,000.

The County Attorney negotiating the settlement agreement told the Board during a public hearing specifically called to consider his resignation that Baker wasn't rejecting the proposed agreement but requested another week to think about it. After listening to public comments, the Board voted against Baker's request and ended negotiations.

The Board's decision Friday made it very clear that they will not allow negotiations to continue any further with Baker. The only recourse to remove Baker from office will be by recall. So far, the investigation into the Clerk and Recorder's Office has cost Arapahoe County more than \$600,000 in staff time, attorney's fees, investigation costs and other employee costs.

"We're disappointed by Mr. Baker's action today because we were hoping to close the taxpayers checkbooks and future liability," said Commissioner Debra Vickrey. "We want employees to get back to work in a safe environment, free of harassment and intimidation. We also want to ensure our citizens that they will have fair and honest elections in our County again; and that they can get their documents recorded in a timely manner."

Baker, through his attorney, contacted the County last Friday and opened discussions regarding the terms of his resignation. The County agreed to negotiate the severance agreement with Baker after a fourth employee filed a claim against the county alleging sexual harassment and hostile work environment.

"His attorney came to the County Attorney to negotiate a deal and the proposed terms were more than generous for Mr. Baker," Vickrey added. "Quite frankly, we would have choked on cutting the check, but we were hoping to end this horrible ordeal that has taken a great financial, legal and emotional toll on our citizens, our employees and our taxpayers."

"He did not negotiate in good faith. The primary reason we even considered this agreement is because of the huge liability that lies ahead. The recall will cost about \$350,000 to \$400,000; we have four serious claims that could cost the county millions; and we have employees telling us on a daily basis how bad things are in the office. The settlement agreement was our best, and least expensive way to stop the financial hemorrhaging of Arapahoe County."

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