

Address to Council 10-24-07

Mary Hasan – Vice President

City of Dallas Employees - Steelworkers Association #9479

Honorable Mayor, Members of the City Council. My name is Mary Hasan. I am here today as Vice President of Steelworkers Union. Mr. Mayor, when you were running for mayor, I met with you, and if you recall, all my concerns were about civilian employees. And I know that this council has always said, 'we can't micro manage', but we all know you do what you want to do. And what I am saying to you, part of you, voted to change the grievance process. You voted where city employees can only grieve as high as the (their) director, it's not working. If the city manager and the ACM's are too busy to hear grievances, then you should have appointed an outside board where city employees can have a fair chance. So they can have somebody that is not tied to management. The morale of your civilian employees is terrible.

Mayor Leppert you told me if you became mayor that you would walk around and talk to the civilian employees. I'm not talking about talking to them in front of their managers and supervisors, because they can't talk. And then you read in the paper the story in the Dallas Examiner where a director said she doesn't investigate anonymous complaints. You receive anonymous complaints because people are afraid for their jobs. You think they are going to jeopardize their family's livelihood? If we had somewhere to go, where we could receive a fair hearing you won't have anonymous complaints. That's one of the reasons I am going to retire from the council office. Because in the council office you get to keep you constitutional rights, you get the right to free speech and all of that, but other city employees are deigned these same rights. Council members, you set the policy about the grievance procedure, you can change the policy. It is not an issue of micro management; it's an issue of fairness. You have a lot of people in supervisory positions who are not qualified, and if they don't like you they give you a hard time. We need help.

End Statement

To listen to an .mp3 of the address and associated comments right click here
(Address starts about 64 minutes into this audio)

http://www.ci.dallas.tx.us/cso/mp3/City_Council_2007_10-24_Hr-1.mp3

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(Ed. Note; Council comments detailed below, possible typo or minor omissions)

Councilman Atkins – Has heard these kind of things from the citizens and employees. He told the city of manager and mayor he would like them to create some kind of committee that can look into these issues and report back to the council with some kind of solution that we can all live with.

Councilman (?? name indistinct, will be checked and fixed tomorrow) – Echoes what Mr. Atkins has said that plenty of times, people feel a level of confidence in talking to certain council members when they are away from city hall. There have been several concerns, and he wants employees especially to know that we hear you. There are certain parameters that they have to deal with and that they will, but we need to at least at some point talk about it, so we can see how things of this nature can be addressed. There are rumbles in all types of levels and areas and within their guidelines they need to address them.

Mayor Leppert thinks it is a fair question. He wants the city manager to get back with Ms. Medrano's committee Quality of Life and Governmental Services. He wants Ms. Suhm to visit with Ms. Medrano's committee on these issues.

Councilwoman Davis – Agrees that they need to look into what is going on. Because anytime when an employee comes before the council, that's serious, because something is happening, something is going on. She continues to say about the pay raises that if a supervisor or a department head has problems with a particular employee, how do we know that person is going to be treated fair for a pay raise. She has had some employees, she will not name names, but they have come to her and said they a raise, they haven't gotten a raise in five years, that their directors are not treating them fair. And it is so secret, and they are so nervous to talk to about it. And if you tell them to go through the proper channels, they say that nothing will happen, that Ms. Suhm is not going to listen to us. Ms. Davis says we really need to look into it, see what is going on. And she agrees with Mr. Atkins that we might need to have a committee to look into this. Let's fix the problem. She thinks our employee should be here, first they should be excited about working with the city of Dallas, and they should have a

comfortable pay raise, she continues to say that if people are not being paid, they are not going to work.

Councilman Rasansky – Disturbed to hear that Ms Hasan is retiring; he could always count on her for a smile and saying hello. But told Ms. Suhm he doesn't see that in the building. He has gotten on elevators and has seen ACM's not even say hello to employees, he thinks it is wrong and that we have the wrong atmosphere here. We spend all these funds on consultants to do this or that but he thinks that Suhm needs to have training sessions with her employees to greet people. He is glad Ms. Hasan is bringing that to council's attention. We need a better atmosphere in city hall. He has a file in his office that has anonymous letters in it. He has been getting so many of them and he doesn't like to see that. People send them this way, because they are afraid that they are going to lose their job. That isn't right. It's isn't a right atmosphere to work on and it is a chilling atmosphere. He told Ms. Suhm that he would really like to see a better work relationship/environment around this building. Someone said something at a public safety meeting; he is not sure, it might have been Dr. Garcia, who said that every time we see a police officer we should shake their hand and thank them for doing a good job. This is what we need to be doing at the city to our employees. We have lost a lot of good employees this past year, a lot of good employees. Some leave for a better positions, but maybe that wouldn't have happened if we had increased the working relationship we have here. Sorry this has happened and wishes Ms. Hasan would reconsider about retiring. Hopes Ms. Suhm takes note of this.

Mayor Leppert – Ms Suhm will back on a number of those areas that are real facts, and real facts will get put on the table. We have a number of programs in place; we will go through with it and deal with it on an on going basis.

Councilwoman Hunt – Thanked Ms. Hasan for coming to talk to them today. The message we should take away today is that open and honest communication between employees and the top levels of our city government are critical to insuring that our employees are in a work environment that is conducive to their doing the best job and their best work and feeling respected. Echoes what Mr. Atkins said about looking at this more closely, but she would say that they are not going to get off on the right foot if it is just council and the city managers office at the table. It seems to her that they would want Ms. Hasan and/or some other employee representatives when they are examining this at the council level, otherwise they are not sure they would get the full picture of the concerns that city

employees have. City employees who feel respected in their jobs do a better job for the citizens of Dallas. She hopes that the mayor will have some employee representation at the table who are comfortable with sharing their concerns openly, and that there would not be any repercussions for their honesty.

Councilman Neumann – In his four months of service on the council, he has truly enjoyed the high quality of our city employees. At each public meeting he said how proud he is of our employees. When he speaks of our employees he is speaking about ACMs, managers, directors and the city manager. In an employee base of 13,000 plus there will always be issues, there will always be issues of conflict and conflict resolution. That is the nature of having an organization this large. We have great employees and a great management team. That does not mean that our employees or management can (can't?) always improve. Because employment is a two way street, the employer sets the expectations, the employee understanding that and then meeting in the middle achieve success for both. His comment today is to say we do have great employees and a great management team. He doesn't always agree with them on everything, but we meet in the middle establish expectations we improve and move forward. He welcomes the discussion but we need to make sure it is professional, it is grounded and we always treat people with respect. The management team as well as our employees and go forward together. He wants to make sure that everyone knows that he thinks very strongly that we have great employees. If he comes across someone that in his sole opinion is not of that stature, he elevates that matter and asks if we have an issue with that person. And he would do the same with a supervisory person. However, he differs with Mr. Rasansky in that he have never experienced the situation where and ACM hasn't visited with an employee in an elevator or similar situation. He is proud of the employees and the management team, and he looks forward to working together to be positive and having it move forward so we continue to have a great city.

Councilman Allen – He echoes Mr. Neumann's statements that the staff that he has seen, that we are fortunate to have the level of staff that we have. Can we get better? Obviously, we do that everyday. And that is why you have good staff, because they know that. He welcomes sitting around any table and going and talking to any employees that we have. But he has been around a long time in the business world, and the management team that we have in place, he has all the confidence in the world, what with the policies and procedures they have out there.

Councilmember Davis – Doesn't think that Ms Hasan is sad that we don't have great employees, we do have great employees. But she has a concern, and that concern has to be addressed. And that concern is that there are some things that have not been done right as far as policy is concerned. And I think our city manager is wonderful and she supports Ms. Suhm, even when she was going through the hard times, and she knows what I'm talking about, I supported her, where others did not support her. Our ACM's are good, but we are talking policy here, the policy, something is wrong. As councilmember's they don't tell us, I mean, we have 13,000 employees, but yeah, out of that 13,000 how many are not being treated fair? You can't tell me all 13,000 employees, everyone is walking around here happy go lucky. I've sat in Mary's position; I've been behind this thing before I became a councilmember so I do understand. So of the 13,000 employees I think we need to do what Mr. Atkins suggested and ask the mayor to pull a committee together and look at the policy. That's it. She commends the employees that are here, but I don't want to get into a tale of two cities.

Councilman Salazar – He agrees wholeheartedly with Ms. Davis, it not an issue of how everyone is, it is an issue of how certain issues are being addressed. And for the most part he thinks we have a great city manager, great management team, but in any kind of business such as a city or company, employees also have concerns and issues that they want to have voiced. And certainly one of the problems that he has seen is the past... and he thinks that the positive thing that he sees is that we have a new mayor and a new majority on the council, and that this council will have the opportunity to really think back or think in the future and then think back to today about what is being said and to make sure that decisions we make in the future are fair and reasonable. That is really the main thing today. To make sure that what every decisions we make with this new council are fair and reasonable. So we can go back, but those votes are already done. One vote that he was very disappointed with, when took away the appeal rights of officers, on the day that they buried an office. That wasn't right, but that was another council and another mayor. We have a new council and a new mayor, so when we talk about employee issues in the future, think about today and all the things we said about how we want to support our employees and our manager. The manager has to make difficult decisions, but when a difficult decision is made, we have to make sure that all parties are aware of why it is difficult and what are the consequences and why it is we have to do what we have to do. He thinks that our employees will understand that sometimes we sometimes make sacrifices, but they want to make sure that the sacrifices

don't just come from people down at the bottom, but they also come the top end as well.

Councilman Rasansky - Just wanted to say a couple of things. First, nobody was saying anything about management. But picking up on what Ms. Davis and Mr. Salazar said. But he does not agree with Mr. Newman, this cannot be a two-way street. It can't be 50/50. It has to be a little bit more in our part to over extend being friendly. He points out that Mr. Newman has been here four months, and when he here a bit longer, Mr. Newman will see what he (Rasansky) is talking about. Staff has a tough job with 13,000 employees here, but he is glad that it has been brought to the table. He wants staff to take a good look at this. He thinks it is astounding that we have to have a committee to learn how to be friendly. We need to get notes out to the department heads about what to do about this. That is what he would like to see.

Mayor Leppert – Told Mr. Rasansky that there are some facts that need to be put on the table, and that he has already told the city manager to do that. She (Ms. Suhm) will do it in a thoughtful and methodical way, she will get with Councilwoman Medrano's committee, Quality of Life & Gov't. Services, and we will approach this in a very thoughtful manner.