

## **Amendment to March 15th complaint.**

Below is the amendment to clarify and add to my complaint with the changes highlighted.

### **Yet Another Violation**

With the December 11 Village Board approval of the new list of workers (EXHIBIT O), LaBarge has gotten her favorite, previously illegal poll workers on the list approved by the Village Board.

However, even with a list of new and willing approved workers, LaBarge arbitrarily again brought in an unknown, unapproved worker Cindy Aucutt to work the February 20 primary.

Aucutt is not on the list of general election workers approved by the Village Board on Dec 11, 2023, but is specifically identified as an alternate Chief Inspector, to be used only to replace one of the primary Chief Inspectors, not approved for general poll work; particularly when so many other workers are readily available.

She also brought in Cindy Falkowski, a non-resident of the municipality, to work the election, when 7.30 (4) (c) states that non-residents, even when approved by the Village Board, can be used only as a last choice, when no other approved worker is available.

### **Summary**

The facts are documented - Ms Labarge has a history of bringing in unauthorized election inspectors to every election that she has conducted. It is clear to me that this practice is not legal as I explained to her early last summer, and again at the December Village Board meeting.

The intent of statute 7.30 is to have a system that has safeguards for the integrity of the election process. These safeguards appear to have been missing in Kronenwetter since LaBarge took office.

In apparent retaliation for, or perhaps diversion from my questions regarding LaBarges election practices, she wrote a quasi-complaint/opinion letter which was later determined by the Village Attorney and Village Board to be insufficient as an actual complaint, and also contained a number of false statements. LaBarge stated that questions about here election decisions constituted "harassment", and that such inquiries should be stopped.

This "complaint" was then sent to the media in an apparent attempt to vilify myself as a current candidate for re-election as trustee. (EXHIBITS S and T).

I submit that this is further evidence that LaBarge has had no interest in providing honest, good faith answers to inquiries about her allegedly illegal, partisan election activities, but instead has shown bad faith and hostility to addressing and/or correcting her actions.

LaBarge's answers at the December 11 Board meeting and her expressed disregard for regulations only raises doubts and creates the lower confidence that she complains about in her email.

LaBarge did a channel 9 interview on or about January 3 or 4, in which she advocates for voters to bring in "new faces and new ideas", in other words- "replace the [conservative] incumbents". She also "likes" social media posts that disparage the incumbents.

She said she was misquoted or taken out of context, but that appears to be another lie to cover for her behavior, as again the evidence indicates otherwise. In any case, it seems to be inappropriate, biased behavior for an official who is in charge of supposedly fair elections.

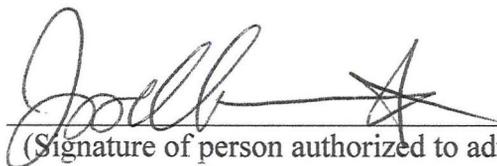
Amendment digitally signed

Ken Charneski March 16, 2024

I, Kenneth M. Charneski, being first duly sworn, on oath, state that I personally read the above amendment to the March 15 complaint (WEC request number 36889) , and that the above allegations are true based on my personal knowledge and, as to those stated on information and belief, I believe them to be true. *IN ADDITION TO THE ORIGINAL COMPLAINT.*

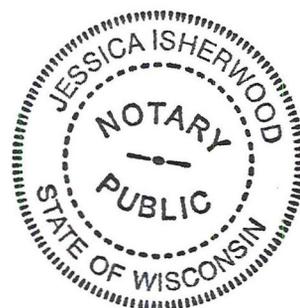
  
Complainant's Signature

STATE OF WISCONSIN  
County of Marathon,  
Sworn to before me this 27th day of March, 2024.

  
(Signature of person authorized to administer oaths)

My commission expires 11-19-2026 , or is permanent.

Notary Public or Jessica Isherwood  
(official title if not notary)



Please send this completed form to:  
Mail: Wisconsin Elections Commission  
P.O. Box 7984 Madison, WI 53707-7984  
Fax: (608) 267-0500  
Email: elections@wi.gov



This is the Kronenwetter clerk's Dec 14 "complaint" against me (in black) with my comments in red and some of the most untrue and inflammatory statements highlighted in yellow.

Email title: **Concerns Regarding Actions of Village Board Member**

Village Board Members,

I would like all of you to know Trustee Ken Charneski has been reaching out to surrounding village clerks with open records request on topics he is separately "investigating" on his own and is directing them on how he feels they should perform their job duties. One example **the only example there is** is his communication with the Village of Weston clerk and she is **beyond frustrated** with Trustee Charneski. According to the Weston Village Clerk, Mr. Charneski has resorted to telling her how she should be doing her job as a clerk for the village of Weston and is directing her to perform **incorrect job duties**. **See the original email thread to Weston (#1) What was said there that was incorrect? The Weston clerk told Tim Shaw that I was absolutely right in the facts I offered, when he discussed the matter with her at length.**

**What exactly is Ms LaBarge referring to? How many clerks is she talking about? This was one clerk, and the purpose of the contact is explained below.**

It is one thing to submit an open records request for answers, but when one continues the conversation and begins to **direct that employee** from another community on how to perform their job duties. **I believe** such actions are inappropriate and unacceptable. The Weston Village Clerk **was in shock** that Trustee Charneski took it upon himself to email her and provide his personal correction in her job duties. She stated if she had to work for Kronenwetter as a clerk, she would quit and I think that statement alone speaks volumes. **Ms Brehm denies saying this, according to Mr. Shaw.**

I informed her to report his actions to her Administrator Jamie Gebert. **So, LaBarge claims I "directed" Ms Brehm, and was "telling her how to do her job", but then LaBarge herself turns around and directs ("informs") Ms. Brehm to report to her administrator. The double standard is apparent.**

**Where is she getting all this animosity from? See the original emails to the Weston clerk, then decide if this complaint is being fair and honest.**

**Ms Brehm basically denied saying any of the above. Attached the article that includes the two main emails that I sent to Weston - only upbeat, helpful information. Where is the cause for Birk-LaBarge to complain so vehemently, particularly about something that has nothing to do with Kronenwetter?**

**I feel** Trustee Charneski's tactics and actions are inappropriate and have reached far beyond authority as an elected trustee.

I sent an email less than two weeks ago, copying the board, telling Trustee Charneski **I felt** he was **harassing** me and **to stop**. Those actions have not stopped. **See that email thread regarding that first complaint, then decide who it was who decided to try to pick a fight. Where is there any "harassment" or "slander" on my part?**

What is it that she claims "has not stopped"? I barely communicated with her between her first complaint (Nov 28) and this one (Dec 14), and always in writing.

Such actions have also been directed to other staff members here at the village, Who? former staff members, Who? and surrounding community clerks. Who? I feel as if Trustee Charneski's actions towards myself alone, have been severe and pervasive and I feel as if I have been intimidated, and that his actions are hostile and abusive. Any details? Any examples? She declined to provide any examples at all when she was asked to do so by another trustee. And now he has carried over his actions to clerks from surrounding municipalities. Notice how she provides no facts, and that everything is based on how she "feels", but after 6 weeks, has provided nothing to show cause for why those feelings should be considered as being reasonable.

Trustee Charneski is an elected government official. I am requesting Trustee Charneski's unwarranted harassing behavior's be addressed immediately. Again with the false, broad-brush accusations. As employees, we have standards of conduct we have to follow and policies we are expected to follow. I believe that the same standards hold for Village of Kronenwetter elected officials as well. She is complaining because I asked questions at a meeting about how she has apparently been conducting elections without following the law. Is it a "standard" to expect a trustee to ignore such activity?

As a result of Trustee Charneski's personal comments during village board meetings, I feel as if the public is experiencing less confidence in my duties as your village clerk, and frankly I feel as if I am becoming a public embarrassment. I am feel as if I am an embarrassment to our residents due to Trustee Charneski's inappropriate comments and questioning of my duties during recorded meetings and worse, How dare I question her duties? I dare, because that is MY duty to do so, and the same for every other trustee elected to represent the taxpayers of the Village

What were these supposed inappropriate comments? The question should be - Why does she think that pertinent questions in the public interest are so inappropriate? Her answers however, did set off red flags.

The facts are documented - Ms Labarge has a history of bringing in unauthorized election inspectors not only to the past 2023 Spring election, but at the 3 previous elections as well. It is clear to me that this practice is not legal as I explained to her early last summer, and again at the December VB meeting. I emailed her about these alleged elections violations since last March when I got a complaint from an election worker, and I tried to help her out. I emailed Kim Manley and the Board a summary on October 24.

At the December meeting she still maintained that she has the authority to hire and fire whoever she wants to, when clearly the law says she does not. State statutes regulate this for the sake of honest elections.

The reason I even contacted Weston to begin with, is because at the December meeting I asked Ms. Birk-LaBarge why she combined all the election workers' names into one list, rather than divided by political party as usual. Identifying election workers by party affiliation is the whole point of the statute regarding this process.

Her answer was:

*"I contacted the municipal clerks from all around us - most of them do not put the list on there to protect the privacy of the political party of these folks so they are not persuaded in any way"*

Because her reply made no sense at all to me, and her decision ran contrary to the purpose of the statute and the public perception of fair elections, I later checked the meeting packets of **Mosinee, Marshfield, Schofield, Rothschild**.

Since the **Weston** packet was not out yet, I emailed the clerk there. That's how all this started. The rest is in those emails.

So, I think the reason Ms. LaBarge sounds so scornful of my "investigating" is because I discovered that what she told the Board was not true.

I found out that **Rothschild is actually the only place** of the surrounding municipalities that combines all the election workers names into one list rather than separated by political party. All the other four surrounding municipalities plus Wausau not only separate the names on the list by affiliation, but two of them give the workers addresses, and one even gave the phone numbers.

So, it appears that this was a personal, arbitrary decision on Ms Birk-LaBarge's part, to blend all the names into one list.

Concealing the political party affiliation of the election inspectors makes it much more difficult for the public to know if the clerk is bringing in a balance of inspectors from each party to work at the elections, and this concealment works against the public interest by casting doubt on the integrity of Village elections. Without opposing party members to keep an eye on each other, the potential is there for election fraud.

If there is any embarrassment to be had, I believe it is to the Village, when the clerk gives answers in public that appear to be so misleading, and help undermine public confidence in the elections like this.

She said we must trust the clerk to bring in a balance of election inspectors, but how do you trust someone who defends her history of disregarding election regulations?

Furthermore, the whole idea of having statutes that require the political party lists, and a balance of election inspectors, is by default to **not trust the clerk**, whoever they may be. It is not an issue of whether or not they can be trusted. The idea is to have a system that has safeguards for the integrity of the election system. These safeguards appear to have been missing in Kronenwetter since LaBarge took office.

LaBarge's answers at the meeting and her expressed disregard for regulations only raises doubts and creates the lower confidence that she complains about in her email.

LaBarge did a channel 9 interview about January 3 or 4, in which she appears to advocate for voters to bring in "new faces and new ideas", in other words- replace the incumbents. She said she was misquoted or taken out of context, but again the evidence indicates otherwise, and in any case, it seems to be inappropriate, biased behavior for an official who is in charge of supposedly fair elections.

I feel like an embarrassment to other village clerks as I represent Kronenwetter and I am embarrassed by Trustee Charneski's **inappropriate communication** as an elected official for the Village of Kronenwetter with our surrounding clerks. I think she should check with Ms Brehm to see if she is more upset about my email information, or about Ms Birk-LaBarge

misrepresenting Brehm's comments and putting her in an undeserved public spotlight for things she apparently never said.

I feel I have made the village President and village board aware of my concerns, but have received no written response from the Village Board. That is Voll's fault. I told him right away that this complaint needed to be addressed (see attachment Voll's reply). We have policies in place and standards of conduct for employees but those standards and policies must not be clear to Trustee Charneski because his actions continue unabated. What is she even talking about? In addition, the Village Board has taken no actions regarding Mr. Charneski's behavior. This is a complaint against the Board/Village. Are the standards different for elected officials? I do not see this negative conduct in any other Trustees. How will the Village Board address my concerns and how will Mr. Charneski be held accountable for his actions? How can there be accountability when she provides no definition of "negative conduct", or any evidence to address? Trustee Charneski should be setting a positive example on how staff interacts with committee and board members, but he has set a tone that is disrespectful, inhumane, dysfunctional and bullying. Can she elaborate on these false accusations? He is the only trustee or committee member at this time that displays these types of unwarranted behaviors. Trustee Charneski's actions as a public official are not standard and he is interfering with my own work performance. A term that she has apparently taken from the Employee Handbook, and which indicates to me she has a purpose in writing this email, using the right buzz words.

I feel it is VERY important you know how I feel and where I stand as an employee of this village.

Again, the clerk continually asserts how she feels, and she happens to describe her feelings in very inflammatory, unjustified terms that are perfect for the media to quote whether or not there is any factual basis to it. She has yet to provide a single, specific bit of evidence for any of it.

This is all appearing at a time when the election is gearing up.

## Concerns Regarding Actions of Village Board Member



Bobbi Birk-LaBarge <bbirklabarge@kronenwetter.org>

Thu 12/14/2023 4:03 PM

To:Village Board <VillageBoard@kronenwetter.org>

Cc:cdem1@charter.net <cdem1@charter.net>;Lee D. Turonie <LDT@dempseylaw.com>

Village Board Members,

I would like all of you to know Trustee Ken Charneski has been reaching out to surrounding village clerks with open records request on topics he is separately "investigating" on his own and is directing them on how he feels they should perform their job duties. One example is his communication with the Village of Weston clerk and she is beyond frustrated with Trustee Charneski. According to the Weston Village Clerk, Mr. Charneski has resorted to telling her how she should be doing her job as a clerk for the village of Weston and is directing her to perform incorrect job duties. It is one thing to submit an open records request for answers, but when one continues the conversation and begins to direct that employee from another community on how to perform their job duties. I believe such actions are inappropriate and unacceptable. The Weston Village Clerk was in shock that Trustee Charneski took it upon himself to email her and provide his personal correction in her job duties. She stated if she had to work for Kronenwetter as a clerk, she would quit and I think that statement alone speaks volumes. I informed her to report his actions to her Administrator Jamie Gebert.

I feel Trustee Charneski's tactics and actions are inappropriate and have reached far beyond authority as an elected trustee. I sent an email less than two weeks ago, copying the board, telling Trustee Charneski I felt he was harassing me and to stop. Those actions have not stopped. Such actions have also been directed to other staff members here at the village, former staff members, and surrounding community clerks. I feel as if Trustee Charneski's actions towards myself alone, have been severe and pervasive and I feel as if I have been intimidated, and that his actions are hostile and abusive. And now he has carried over his actions to clerks from surrounding municipalities.

Trustee Charneski is an elected government official. I am requesting Trustee Charneski's unwarranted harassing behavior's be addressed immediately. As employees, we have standards of conduct we have to follow and policies we are expected to follow. I believe that the same standards hold for Village of Kronenwetter elected officials as well.

As a result of Trustee Charneski's personal comments during village board meetings, I feel as if the public is experiencing less confidence in my duties as your village clerk, and frankly I feel as if I am becoming a public embarrassment. I am feel as if I am an embarrassment to our residents due to Trustee Charneski's inappropriate comments and questioning of my duties during recorded meetings and worse, I feel like an embarrassment to other village clerks as I represent Kronenwetter and I am embarrassed by Trustee Charneski's inappropriate communication as an elected official for the Village of Kronenwetter with our surrounding clerks.

I feel I have made the village President and village board aware of my concerns, but have received no written response from the Village Board. We have policies in place and standards of conduct for employees but those standards and policies must not be clear to Trustee Charneski because his actions continue unabated. In addition, the Village Board has taken no actions regarding Mr. Charneski's behavior. Are the standards different for elected officials? I do not see this negative conduct in any other Trustees. How will the Village Board address my concerns and how will Mr. Charneski be held accountable for his actions? Trustee Charneski should be setting a positive example on how staff interacts with committee and board members, but he has set a tone that is disrespectful, inhumane, dysfunctional and bullying. He is the only trustee or committee member at this time that displays these types of unwarranted behaviors. Trustee Charneski's actions as a public official are not standard and he is interfering with my own work performance.

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**Bobbi J. Birk-LaBarge**

Village Clerk

**Village of Kronenwetter**

(715) 692-1728

(715) 301-8326 work cell

[bbirklabarge@kronenwetter.org](mailto:bbirklabarge@kronenwetter.org)

Village Municipal Center

1582 Kronenwetter Drive Kronenwetter, WI 54455

Population: 8,539

<https://cms6.revize.com/revize/kronenwettervillage>



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