

Town of Franklin

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OFFICE OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Cantoreggi Reinstatement Press Release

April 11, 2024

From: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator

On February 15, 2024 the [Massachusetts State Ethics Commission](#) announced that Franklin DPW Director, Robert “Brutus” Cantoreggi violated Conflict of Interest Law relative to the unethical acceptance of gifts, G.L. chapter 268A, section 23(b)(2)(i). In the attached Press Release from the State Ethics Commission and the Disposition Agreement between the Ethics Commission and Mr. Cantoreggi, Mr. Cantoreggi admits to the proposed violations and waives his right to a hearing.

On February 9, 2024, when the Town was in receipt of this information, Mr. Cantoreggi was [placed on unpaid administrative leave indefinitely](#) and until further notice. Since this time, the Town has been working to gather information in order to fully understand the extent of Mr. Cantoreggi’s actions in his official capacity as Department of Public Works Director.

“While the realization of this ethics violation has been very difficult for Town staff, the Town Council, and the Franklin community at large, this incident was an isolated incident and does not reflect on the entire organization,” stated Jamie Hellen, Franklin Town Administrator. “The Town has independent annual financial town audits in addition to effective standards, training, internal controls and policies in place and a truly remarkable staff culture. These were careless and hubris actions by Mr. Cantoreggi, but do not reflect a widespread problem in the organization.”

The Town has issued a report on the complete findings of its own internal investigation. Notably, and most importantly, zero taxpayers dollars were affected by this violation and succeeding decisions. No bribery allegations, charges, or findings relevant to a quid pro-quo or “something for something” or any other illegal or criminal act were found. There were no procurement violations found.

In addition to a \$15,000 fine to the State Ethics Commission and significant damage to Mr. Cantoreggi’s reputation, both personally and professionally, the Town instituted the following corrective measures:

- An unpaid suspension for two months; a wage loss of \$29,935, or \$44,935 in total, when accounting for the civil penalty from the state;

- A six (6) day reduction of employee Earned Time (aka "ET" which is equivalent to vacation time) for time off during the two ski trips as they were not work related;
- No accrued additional Earned Time during the time of the two-month suspension, which is lost time for a total of approximately 11.3 days (91 hours);
- One-year prohibition on attendance at industry sponsored events and conferences in an effort to focus on DPW staff needs and succession planning;
- Execution of a "Last Chance" Agreement for any unknown past and future incidents;
- Release and waiver of all legal and privacy rights;
- Public apology acknowledging impacts on the organization and community; and
- Repeating his state mandated Ethics Training and documenting the receipt and review of the Conflict of Interest Law Summary.

Based on the facts of the Ethics Investigation, as well as additional supporting factors and materials that have been laid out, the Town Administrator has decided to reinstate Robert "Brutus" Cantoreggi as the DPW Director, effective Thursday, April 11, 2024 at 7:00 AM.

"I deeply apologize to all of the residents of Franklin for making such a poor decision without truly thinking through the ramifications of it," said Robert "Brutus" Cantoreggi. "I am very regretful of the unintended consequences my poor judgment has had on the Town, my staff, my colleagues and my family. I have committed my professional career to the Town of Franklin and truly love my job. Over the past eight weeks, I have used this time to reflect and it has reaffirmed how much I value my role as the Public Works Director for the Town of Franklin. It has not been easy being under the scrutiny of false accusations by some, but I have also been humbled by the amount of support I have received by so many others. I will never be able to express my deep gratitude to the members of the community, the Council, and Town Administrator for their time working on this ordeal. Going forward, I will recommit myself to working to be the best Public Works director, colleague, friend, husband and father. I know we have all made mistakes in life, and I can unequivocally say that I have learned huge lessons from this. I am so grateful for the second chance, I will not let you down, and I pledge to do everything in my power to earn back the public's trust."

The Town Council received a briefing from the Town Administration on March 13, 2024 in Executive Session. In an effort to be transparent and proactive with the public, these materials have been posted on a dedicated webpage.

"Mr. Cantoreggi's actions are extremely disappointing, and as the DPW Director he should have known that his acceptance of these gifts violated the Conflict of Interest Law," stated Tom Mercer, Chair of the Franklin Town Council. "These proscribed actions not only reflect poorly on

Mr. Cantoreggi personally but also on the Town of Franklin. While significant reputational damage has been done, I feel the prescribed disciplinary action is on par with the misconduct. As a lifelong Franklin resident and one who values his expertise, he has earned a second chance in my book due to his dedicated and innovative leadership over two decades. While we may individually have our own views on the matter, the entire Town Council has agreed to move forward together. ”

“It is vital that Franklin residents have the utmost trust and confidence in the integrity of their government,” stated Hellen. “With this information I acknowledge a violation of the public’s trust and confidence. I will work with Mr. Cantoreggi to build back public trust and confidence moving forward. Mr. Cantoreggi is remorseful for his lapse in judgment, and I believe if there is anyone who can restore both his own reputation and the reputation of the Town, it is Brutus.”

[Town Administrator website with all materials](#)

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