

Ex-Utah County official sues fellow commissioners

Courts » Greg Graves says they wrongfully accused him of sexual harassment, ruined his reputation and tried to force him out of office.

By **COURTNEY TANNER**
The Salt Lake Tribune

A former Utah County commissioner who was investigated for sexual harassment while in office is now suing his fellow commissioners for telling the public about those allegations — including that he made suggestive comments to a female employee and rubbed her leg above the knee.

Greg Graves maintains those situations never happened.

In his lawsuit filed Tuesday, Graves argues that the accusations were fabricated by the woman who wanted a financial settlement and spread by two of his colleagues who wanted him removed from office. He is suing for defamation.

When reached for a response Wednesday evening, Graves said: “All questions need to go to my attorney.”

His lawyer, Ryan Schriever, said: “We don’t have any comment. It’s filed, and we hope that we can get a resolution. The injury to [my client’s] reputation was real.”

The original complaint filed by the female employee in October 2017 said Graves touched her inappropriately

and that he told her that he was unhappy in his marriage; they were riding in a cart together during an employee golf outing, she said, and he talked about sex.

An investigator hired by the county could not substantiate that, but he did conclude that Graves retaliated against the woman after she reported the alleged misconduct.

The county had released the accusations before the results, which Graves said prejudiced people against him. Many called on Graves to step down — including the Utah Republican Party and U.S. Rep. John Curtis — but he instead waited until his term ended in January.

In his filing, though, he says the allegations were false and irreparably damaged his reputation. He hasn’t been able to get a job. His relationship with his wife was “negatively impacted.” And his children are being bullied at school.

Graves says the two other commissioners — Nathan Ivie and Bill Lee — knew that would happen and continued anyway to “portray Graves in a false light in that people would falsely believe he was guilty of sexual harassment.”



Former Utah County Commissioner Greg Graves files suit against fellow officeholders.

County.” The current commissioner said Wednesday that he stands by that.

“Obviously, he has his opinions and I have mine,” Ivie said before referring comment to the county’s legal counsel.

For his part, Lee said: “I really don’t have any response” to the lawsuit.

Andrew Morse, who represents Utah County in litigation, said Graves’ claims “are meritless.” He intends to file a motion Monday asking the judge to dismiss the lawsuit.

Additionally, the woman who accused Graves of misconduct and who Graves accused of lying also declined to comment.

That female employee was

the first to report concerns with Graves’ behavior. But it does not appear she was the only one — though redactions in the report make that difficult to determine. At least one employee said she complained to her supervisor about the then-commissioner’s conduct — which she likened to bullying —that led her to search for a job outside of Utah County government in 2017. The county’s report, overall, paints Graves as an intimidating man who some say was vindictive and prone to “outbursts.”

One witness said Graves was mad when an employee wasn’t in the office and called her a “worthless piece of s---.” During another conversation, Graves apparently called himself “the bully commissioner.” (In the lawsuit he labels himself a “a controversial figure in Utah County politics.”)

At the time of the reports, Graves linked the complaints against him to the national wave of women publicly accusing powerful men of sexual misconduct. And he both privately and publicly told people he wanted the first female accuser fired — something he acknowledges in his lawsuit, but suggests stemmed from her poor work performance.

The investigator who looked into the claims said he found the female employee to be “a credible witness” but could not find anyone who had seen what she described take place. He did conclude, however, that there was a “preponderance of evidence” that Graves treated her in “a very poor manner” after the allegations.

He wrote: Graves is “widely viewed as a workplace bully, dishonest, demeaning, intimidating, threatening, explosive, and someone with whom personal interaction is to be avoided as much as possible.”

At the time, there was no procedure to remove or force Graves from office based on the findings.

But issues about Graves’ conduct were raised prior to that, too.

Before Graves became a commissioner, an independent investigation showed he had allegedly playfully spanked a female student while teaching at Alta High School. He was placed on leave for the conduct in 2012. He resigned shortly after.

In response to that and the accusations during his time in office, some public schools within the Utah High School Activities Association have

asked him to no longer referee any games. He cites that among the fallout in his lawsuit.

Additionally, in 2015, a data breach linked Graves’ personal emails to Ashley Madison, a dating website that married people used to set up affairs. He has acknowledged his account but has said he never had an affair.

He made headlines in November 2017, as well, after he joined the Democratic Party, saying he was trying to make a political point to prove he was the only true conservative on the three-member Utah County commission. In his lawsuit, though, he says he switched parties so that if he was ousted from office, the seat would have to be filled by a Democrat — which his two Republican colleagues, he suggested, would hate.

Graves beat an incumbent for his seat in 2014. And his job on the commission offered salary and benefits valued at \$168,000 annually.

In his lawsuit, he asks for financial damages to compensate for the harm to his reputation, as well as for how the accusations “significantly exacerbated” a pre-existing traumatic brain injury.

‘High, fast and cold’ L. Cottonwood Creek is under flood watch Thursday

By **COURTNEY TANNER** | *The Salt Lake Tribune*

The creek that runs out of Little Cottonwood Canyon is under flood watch through Thursday afternoon with meteorologists warning that the water is “high, fast and cold.”

“The warm temperatures that we’ve been getting have increased the snow melt and pushed the flow up to near flood stage,” said David Bonnette with the National Weather Service. “The whole creek will be up to the banks.”

Because of the warm temperatures over the past few days in Salt Lake County, the snow in the canyon is melting quickly and filling Little Cottonwood Creek. The watch issued says: “Damage is possible in valley areas adjacent to the creek.”

Bonnette said there are not a lot of houses at risk, but that people should stay away from the banks of the creek which could possibly erode. He warns residents to stay out of the water — and to watch their dogs and children nearby who could be at risk of drowning in the dangerous conditions in an area that’s popular to hike.

“It’s definitely not a good place to be,” he added. “Just take caution.”

The water levels will peak midday Thursday and should lower after that as a cool storm system moves in — slowing how much melting snow runs into the creek.

There is also a warning for the Duchesne River in central Utah from the town of Hanra to the town of Myton.

It will remain in flood stage through early next week.

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