

Eva Madison
Justice of the Peace
District 9



2600 Candlewood Drive
Fayetteville, AR 72703
(479) 521-2652

April 17, 2015

Hon. Marilyn Edwards
Washington County Judge
280 N. College Ave., 5th Floor
Fayetteville, AR 72701

Dear Judge Edwards:

After careful thought and consideration, I have decided to accept the role of co-investigator in the County's investigation of the ongoing bridge situation, specifically the internal County issues of how our Road Department came to build bridges incorrectly and why the errors were not detected and corrected sooner. I have a few thoughts on the investigation I wanted to share, so that you and the Court may consider them before Monday's meeting. I hope we can discuss them in more detail at the meeting.

I have two requests concerning the actual interviews to be conducted. First, I believe all interviews should take place off-site at a neutral location. This may mean we need to rent a facility. I am concerned that some witnesses may feel uncomfortable being "summoned" to the 5th Floor of the Courthouse, and I want the process to be as open and comfortable as possible. Second, I believe we should hire a court reporter to record all of the interviews and prepare transcripts, which can then be confirmed by the witnesses as their statements. That way, Mr. Short and I are not trying to do the interviewing and full-blown note taking at the same time. A transcript ensures for all involved that our interviews are accurately recorded - both our questions and the witnesses' answers. I considered whether Mr. Short and I could do the recording ourselves by some electronic means, but I would prefer a neutral third-party be responsible for this aspect of the interviews. This too will result in costs to the County, but I consider it to be a small price to pay in this situation overall.

I also want to ensure that, in our investigation, we will have access to any and all witnesses, realizing we cannot compel anyone's attendance outside the County, and any and all documents in the County's possession. Full access is imperative to a thorough investigation.

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Finally, I feel compelled to note that I do share some of Justice Sue Madison's concerns about Mr. Short's role in the investigation. While I have no doubt his past experience working for the Arkansas State Police makes him a skilled interviewer and investigator, we have to acknowledge that he is someone who should be interviewed in the investigation. For instance, George Braswell alleges that he met with you and Mr. Short in October 2013 regarding the Harvey Dowell Bridge. Mr. Short should be asked about this meeting. This is just one example. In addition, because Mr. Short is your Chief of Staff and technically in the chain of command of the Road Department, I have to wonder whether every witness will feel comfortable speaking freely in front of him. At the same time, I realize some witnesses may not want to speak to me either, but I come into this situation as much more of an outsider than Mr. Short. The Court should discuss how to handle these issues.

I appreciate the trust you and my fellow Justices have placed in me, and I will work very hard to complete the investigation and report back on your timeline. I look forward to confirming the scope of the investigation and discussing some of my thoughts at Monday's meeting.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eva Madison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Eva Madison

cc: Justices of the Peace
Members of the Press