

Last night (May 19) I gave public comment at the East Lansing City Council Discussion Only meeting about Robert's sexual harassment and verbal abuse towards me. I was the first person to speak. I described Robert's abuse that occurred over 2025. My story remains the same as when I reported everything to HR and the investigating attorneys. I reported the facts and truth about my interactions with the City Manager. I also talked about how I used the proper channels for reporting abuse and followed the rules to no avail. I still see no measurable change in Robert's behavior and, to my knowledge, he has not been held accountable. This led to my decision to give public comment. I made this decision despite my fears of retaliation and losing my job.

Today (May 20), Robert [REDACTED] against me. Allison Riffel, Assistant to the City Manager, witnessed the entire interaction. I was working in my office with my door mostly closed. It was after the Leading Managers meeting and I was in the office alone. I heard Robert and Allison walk in the office together. Robert [REDACTED] [REDACTED] "Erica had a defiant attitude today." I don't know his exact words, but I know I heard my name and the word "defiant". I had no idea who he was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] walked into his office and said, "Robert, do you need me?"

Robert was still on the phone and said, "No."

Me: "Oh, okay. Because I heard you say my name, so I figured you needed something."

Robert: "No, I do not."

As I walked back to my office I saw Gouri Sashital (city labor attorney) and Courtney Phillips (HR). I immediately ran over to them and pulled them into the conference room. I told them what just happened in the City Manager's office [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

I moved to a new office this afternoon. It's a cubicle in Finance on the first floor. I feel like I can finally relax and work [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

*Another example of how I believe Robert is [REDACTED] May 20, 2026*

Robert has described our weekly Leading Managers meetings as times for professional development where staff can learn how to become supervisors and directors,

so the city can grow and retain its own talent. I thought it was odd this morning when Allison (Robert's assistant) sent an email saying, "Anyone who does not directly supervise other employees does not need to attend today's meeting." I thought this was weird because: 1.) people who regularly attend Leading have never been excluded from attending; and 2.) if the whole point of Leading is to develop leadership skills, then why exclude people from an important management skill – learning how to evaluate your staff. I immediately felt that this email was directed at me and a response to my public comment the night before. I felt this way because this exclusion has never happened before. Also, Robert has used this type of language before when he explained to me why I couldn't participate in a different leadership opportunity. On this other occasion (April 29, 2026, 3:30pm in Robert's office with HR Director Emily Kenney), I asked to join Steering Committee meetings only on days when a unique leadership development opportunity was occurring (this is organized by the DEI Department). Robert said he didn't feel this leadership training was appropriate for me because it was only for his direct reports. I am his direct report. He realized he said this and quickly corrected what he said with, "I mean this is only for directors, people who have staff." I found it interesting that now Allison's email from this morning made this same distinction. I felt he was trying to prevent me from attending Leading Managers and this was his best argument or reason for making his case. And again, Robert often uses Allison to communicate information instead of doing it himself.

I decided to go anyway. Honestly, I have been looking forward to this meeting for weeks. I want to learn how to properly evaluate my future staff. I aspire to one day be a department director, or higher, and I want to learn how to be a good supervisor. This is the perfect opportunity, and I was not going to let him take that away from me.

Also to be truthful, I have waited weeks to ask this question: how could 360 reviews (or reviews where staff get to evaluate their supervisors) be incorporated into the evaluation process? I decided to ask this question during the Q&A portion of the meeting. I added that this could be a valuable exercise because then staff and supervisors can learn and grow together. I learned about 360 reviews from a previous job and it was also discussed at the NGMA conference. I have always wanted to learn more about these evaluations. I don't think Robert liked that I asked this question because later this afternoon I heard him walk into the office a [REDACTED] about me being "defiant".

I am in my new temporary office space in the Finance Department on the first floor of City Hall. Last night (May 20, 2026), my colleague Justin Guigar and I were talking in the office. It was about 6pm. We walked out of the office together as we talked. He asked me if I wanted to walk outside together. I said sure, but first I had to go upstairs to my office in the City Manager's Office to get my coat. [Yesterday afternoon, I quickly grabbed a few essentials from my office and went downstairs to Finance. I wanted to get out of my office fast before I saw Robert again.] I mentioned that I hoped Robert was already gone because I didn't want to see him. Justin offered to either come up to my office with me or wait by the stairs. I told him I was fine. Justin told me he would wait by the stairs for me while I went up. Thankfully, when I went up to my office Robert was already gone for the day. Honestly, I was relieved that Justin waited for me. Some of the worst things that Robert has said to me were when we were alone. Now that Robert feels backed into a corner, I don't know what he will do. I am doing my best to stay away from him for my own [REDACTED] This morning, I thanked Justin for waiting for me. I told him that I [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Justin said he understands.



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**RE: Agenda: Leading Managers - May 20, 2026**

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**From** Allison Riffel <ariffel@cityofeastlansing.com>

**Date** Wed 5/20/2026 8:34 AM

**To** AJ Williams <ajwilliams@cityofeastlansing.com>; Alando Chappell <achappell@cityofeastlansing.com>; Aleece Hodges <ahodges@cityofeastlansing.com>; Alesha Williams <awilliams@cityofeastlansing.com>; Alycia Reiten <areiten@cityofeastlansing.com>; Amy Gordon <agordon@cityofeastlansing.com>; Andrea Smith <asmith@cityofeastlansing.com>; Audrey Kincade <akincad@cityofeastlansing.com>; Bill Fowler <bfowler@cityofeastlansing.com>; Blake Holt <bholt@cityofeastlansing.com>; Caleb Sharrow <csharrow@cityofeastlansing.com>; Carrie Sampson <csampson@cityofeastlansing.com>; Chris King <cking@cityofeastlansing.com>; Chrissie Evaskis-Garrett <cevaskis@elpl.org>; Cliff Walls <cwalls@cityofeastlansing.com>; Courtney Phillips <cphillips@cityofeastlansing.com>; Danielle Stahlin <dstahlin@cityofeastlansing.com>; Elaine Hardy <ehardy@cityofeastlansing.com>; Emily Gordon <emily.gordon@cityofeastlansing.com>; Emily Kenney <ekenney@cityofeastlansing.com>

**Cc** Gouri G. Sashital <gsashital@rsjalaw.com>

Good morning,

Anyone who does not directly supervise other employees does not need to attend today's meeting. The majority focus will be on the employee evaluations.

Kindly,

**Allison Riffel**

*Assistant to the City Manager*

City of East Lansing

410 Abbot Road

East Lansing, MI 48823

517-319-6920

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**From:** Allison Riffel

**Sent:** Tuesday, May 19, 2026 5:02 PM

**Subject:** RE: Agenda: Leading Managers - May 20, 2026

Hello all!

Attached please find an updated agenda with a presentation (and location!) change on June 10! Attached you will find individual attachments of the employee evaluation sheets to assist in our discussion tomorrow.

Wishing you all a good night.

Kindly,

**Allison Riffel**

*Assistant to the City Manager*

City Manager's Office

[ariffel@cityofeastlansing.com](mailto:ariffel@cityofeastlansing.com)

**From:** Allison Riffel

**Sent:** Friday, May 15, 2026 1:46 PM

**Subject:** Agenda: Leading Managers - May 20, 2026

Good afternoon,

Attached is the agenda for the upcoming Leading Managers meeting on Wednesday, May 20. Attorney Gouri Sashital will be leading a discussion on Employee Evaluation Best Practices.

Wishing you all a good weekend!

**Allison Riffel**

*Assistant to the City Manager*

City Manager's Office

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