

12 August 2025

Michael J. Redlinger | *City Administrator*
The City of Fargo
225 Fourth Street North
Fargo, ND 58102

Michael,

For nearly 18 years, it has been my distinct privilege to serve the residents, businesses and visitors of Fargo through my employment with The City of Fargo. It is here where this Class B North Dakota guy was able to see firsthand the profound impact of providing excellent services to residents in an efficient manner, all while navigating the intricacies of complex bureaucracies in local, state and federal government. It was an honor to be chosen to create and lead the centralized, unified communications team for Fargo over the last decade.

It is – without question – an understatement to say the last several years have been extraordinarily challenging with both profound and tragic events shaping the trajectory of the community, our organization, the Communications & Governmental Affairs (CommsGA) Department and myself both as an employee and a person. Working to manage/lead many aspects of the construction and fit-up of Fargo's new City Hall was an unexpected responsibility that consumed the first 3.5 years of my time leading Fargo's communications but resulted in a generational asset for the future of Fargo. Forging a private-partnership with the Fargo Lions Club to ideate, fundraise and erect the Spirit of the Sandbagger monument in Downtown Fargo will forever be a highlight. Helping to navigate civil unrest, lead communications for Spring flood fights and spearhead statewide campaigns related to COVID-19 tested us in ways we've never experienced, but we undoubtedly emerged stronger because of these times.

Replacing dilapidated and obsolete equipment to provide Fargo with two state-of-the-art broadcast facilities (and identifying unique funding opportunities and nuanced efficiencies to reduce the financial burden on our residents) has resulted in incredible investments and a true testament to openness in government. We have hosted internationally-recognized experts, Presidential Cabinet secretaries, United States Senators, United States Representatives, Governors, Attorneys General and many more dignitaries in these spaces. We rarely host an event where at least one comment isn't received expressing amazement for the level of technology available in our spaces. This level of excellence has come to be expected and, frankly, can easily be taken for granted if we fail to realize just how future-focused we were when designing these spaces. When the CommsGA Team is continually attacked in the media for its cost and its very relevancy is questioned, it is typically omitted that nearly one-quarter of our entire annual budget is devoted to the costs to run these two broadcast centers. I believe, however, that the most poignant usage of these spaces occurs when we swear-in our newest public safety professionals. Seeing the pride beaming from them (and their families) is nothing short of incredible. I will never forget asking Winter Malone to give Jake Wallin a kiss when I was taking their picture immediately following his graduation and swearing-in as one of our newest police officers. They were nervous to do that in front of everyone, but it was also incredibly beautiful in the moment and even more so after we lost Jake. This photo might just be the one that best embodies the goal I had when I accepted this position – showing the human nature of public servants and their desire to give all of themselves for our residents. Planning Jake's Celebration of Life and leading the communications delegation to Police Week in Washington, D.C. were the honors of a lifetime.

As you know, overseeing public safety communications was not a duty I requested; rather, it was an added responsibility as laid out for our team several years ago. The CommsGA Team members – both personally and professionally – have been attacked for nearly two years as a result of our work surrounding the July 14, 2023 ambush of our officers. Please allow me to be abundantly clear – this team is not the gatekeeper to public information dissemination. Rather, we work around-the-clock to push information out to our community. We

routinely have disagreements with leaders across the organization when we challenge assertions that we should not – or cannot – release information. The assertions leveled at us in the public arena are unfortunate and unfounded. While I assuredly appreciate the support shown to our team by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, I am profoundly disappointed that City Administration never once expressed such support to our team via in-person interaction in our team's weekly meetings or in personal conversations. That silence has been deafening and has had a very substantive negative impact on many of us. Yet, just this past weekend, we received the following comment from a member of the local media, "I think you guys do a terrific job. I've worked with law enforcement agencies across ND & MN for 40 years. The recent criticism of (the) Communication Team and Chief was ridiculous." That was extremely appreciated given the current rancor surrounding the last few weeks of public safety communications.

I can unequivocally say that public safety communications have been one of the highlights (if not the highlight) of my time with The City of Fargo. The dedication, passion, skillset, comradery, intelligence and attitudes of the nearly 400 public safety personnel serving Fargo is second to none. I cannot imagine no longer interacting with – and assisting whenever possible – these incredible individuals each day. They truly want to do their level best and the Fargo community's trust in them is well-placed.

In this position, "other duties as assigned" truly took had real and substantive implications. It was expected that CommsGA would become the island of misfit requests; that is, anything that didn't seem to "fit" somewhere in the organization ended up being my team's responsibility. While this was always a learning experience, it also brought with it resentment from various departments in the organization that did not understand that CommsGA was being asked to serve in this capacity. I – along with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor – asked many times for the ability to be able to fully explain the mission and work of CommsGA to Cabinet and we were assured that would happen. Yet, it never did and the corresponding antagonism between departments continued to grow.

During your tenure as City Administrator, there has been a clear (and profound) power transfer from City Administration to the Finance and Human Resource Departments. Not only are these two internal service departments at the table for nearly every major decision, they are also making operational decisions for departments in place of the department heads duly tasked with this work. To exacerbate the problem, CommsGA staff members are rarely included in strategic meetings where important decisions are made and, instead, brought in to make what was decided "look good." This is a departure from the practice of the previous City Administrator and has had several negative impacts on the ability of the organization to articulate to our residents the reasons and rationale behind the actions of their government. There also is a clear and intentional effort to keep discussions behind closed doors instead of shining the light of transparency on Fargo's governmental operations.

For several years, I would share with potential job applicants the value placed on communications by City Administration; I have not been able to say that statement in nearly three years. I have tried to remedy this by requesting weekly meetings be held with City Administration, City Commission staff and CommsGA, since we all share an office suite. I have suggested this no less than ten times during your tenure and, yet, these meetings have never materialized. I have asked for open records processing to be transferred to another department for over three years as it is inappropriate and unsustainable for this to be housed in CommsGA; this transfer has been supported publicly by a majority of the City Commission. However, as Assistant City Administrator Brenda Derrig recently stated, there is not an interest in moving this out of CommsGA because it would be too (financially) expensive to have others do this work. It seems to now be all about the money instead of all about the people, which directly contradicts the public statements made by City Administration.

This is a reflection of the dichotomy exhibited by City Administration towards this team – bemoaning the lack of work-life balance on our team while also failing to assist in implementing the changes necessary to actually improve this over the long-term. Michael, you and I had a very candid conversation on July 27, 2022, during which I shared that I needed your leadership counsel in trying to balance the many incoming demands with the ability of our staff to deliver. I explicitly stated that I did not know how to have any type of a personal life and a

corresponding family while serving in this position and trying to meet the demands placed upon it. I still am waiting for any assistance, coaching or advice in this area. The problem has not gotten better; in fact, it has only worsened.

When all of Fargo's department heads took part in the Intercultural Development Inventory's Five Voices assessment, there were two "Pioneers" in this group – Fargo Police Chief David Zibolski and myself. "Pioneers" make up about 11% of the U.S. population and are described as "visionary and focused on results and progress. They are strategic thinkers who see possibilities where others might see obstacles." The commonality that unites the Chief and I is the fact that we were both instructed by our respective hiring committees to act as changemakers in our roles. Regardless of personal flaws and shortcomings (of which I have many), it is evident that this organization is ill-equipped and, frankly, quite averse to those seeking to enact the change for which they were hired to accomplish. The ostracization and lack of clear administrative support to incorporate these changes has been discussed, yet no action has occurred to remedy the situation.

In just the past two years, we have seen the removal of two of our organization's department heads. We are now witnessing the personal (and quite public) attacks on two current department heads. This behavior and rancor has a chilling effect on a public servant's willingness to continue serving in these roles. It also has a devastating effect on the organization's ability to attract top talent. In the CommsGA Department, we have had several potential job recruits flatly turn us down because they did not want to work for a politically-charged organization that is seemingly always in the news for the "dysfunction at the dais." Assistant City Administrator Brenda Derrig even stated to me that, "No one in this office is toxic; the toxicity is coming from the electeds." I have had the privilege of knowing all five current City Commissioners and truly believe they all want the best for Fargo. Yet, when our electeds are showing the public that they are so divided on even the most basic topics and have such a level of disrespect for each other, there remains no oxygen in the arena for which to convey the great things being done every day in this organization.

Cost-of-living adjustments cannot be the only thing on which we hang out hats to show City employees the value they bring to the table; we are all craving real, credible and compassionate leadership from City Hall. These problems will not magically change with the comings and goings of new City Commissioners or a new Mayor. The City of Fargo is fractured right now because we lack a North Star, a compass on which we can know whether or not we are hitting the mark. We have no declared vision, mission or values that unite us. Individual departments have seen this void and are filling it themselves, thereby leading to even more fractionalization and compartmentalization. When both of our City Administrators say they are waiting for "leadership to make a decision," that truly feels counter intuitive. Brenda still claims that she "is new here," but she has been in the organization for nearly 40 years and has served in her current position in Administration for over two years. While the Commissioners are assuredly our elected leaders, you and Brenda are our operational leaders and over 1,500 employees need to know where we are headed as an organization and as a workforce.

Mayor Mahoney, Deputy Mayor Kolpack, Commissioner Strand and Commissioner Turnberg's strong support -- especially in the face of recent adversity -- has been extremely appreciated. I will always appreciate Commissioner Piepkorn's support for much of the last decade, especially for his votes in favor of the growth of the Communications Team in response to the needs of the department during my tenure.

I have the upmost respect and gratitude to all of Team Fargo but especially various team members who have contributed to the success of our work over the last decade. Together, this team has done incredible work that has impacted people in ways we will never truly be able to fully grasp; our lifelong friendships with the Wallin Family are an everlasting reminder of just how much the work truly matters. Colleagues in our field have bestowed over 25 regional, national and international awards to the CommsGA Team over our time together. These were trying times, but they also brought out the best in many of us.

There used to be one way to pave a street, plow a road, lay a pipe or pick up trash. Now, however, the rancor of national politics has seeped into Fargo and the impact is profound. The "red way" or the "blue way" for even the

most mundane topics are heralded on social media and go viral. Attacking public employees simply for being a public employee is now a pastime for many. I know that these individuals are not the majority of our population, but they do infiltrate the work we do in all departments.

It has become clear that there are both internal and external politics at play, which have made me realize that I can no longer continue in this position. Conversations have been occurring throughout this year that have only furthered my concerns that the institutional support for my team no longer exists in the way it did when I was hired for the position in early 2016. The viewpoint of the new power epicenter in Fargo – the Finance, Administration and Human Resource (FAHR) triangle – has clearly relegated CommsGA to be a reactive disseminator of sanitized information rather than a strategic partner. The FAHR group is establishing a clique within this organization and it is evident who is on the inside and who is on the outside. The actions over the last year have shown a propensity to allow CommsGA to wither on the vine and I simply cannot sit idly by and allow that to occur under my watch.

As we have discussed on many occasions, I feel very strongly that Human Resources (HR) has not served as an asset to our leadership team. We have need to create all of our own job descriptions, handle our own recruitment, conduct interviews, engage in employment coaching, decipher all reclassification requests, etc. and have rarely received any assistance. We have been told that “you are the experts” when we’ve specifically requested HR guidance on pay, expectations, on-call demands, etc. We have taken every tangible suggestion we can glean from departing team members’ exit interviews and tried to incorporate them to make this a better place to work while also addressing the disparate expectations that are placed on this department when compared to others in the organization. Exit interviews were used against our management team to show we were doing poorly, but actual coaching was not received from HR (even though it was requested). When an HR Manager has the power to tell the City Administrator that she “will resign” if our leadership team’s responses to exit interviews are included in an open record response and that threat is prioritized, that is concerning (especially when we were told that ‘no records exist’ from the meeting we had with said HR Manager detailing our progress, our struggles and our request for assistance).

There is a prevalent concern among our leadership team of involving HR for fear it will be used as “another nail in the coffin” in the ongoing narrative to show we are poor managers. Yet, we were recently told by the Assistant Director of Human Resources that “there are no performance issues whatsoever” with Katie and I and that she hoped “that would offer some reassurance.” We scheduled meetings with the leadership of HR to attempt to repair strains relationships. In fact, I even organized a meeting on March 26, 2025 and called it “Building Bridges and Mending Fences” with HR Leadership, Deputy Chief Communications Office Katie Ettish and myself. During this meeting, Katie and I identified that we felt the HR/CommsGA partnership begin to deteriorate after The Fargo Police Department’s stay interview process and our team’s recommendation to fully release the report to the media and explain its findings/action plan in an open press conference. This recommendation was not received well by the Director of Human Resources and the dissonance has seemingly only grown since then. Towards the end of the March 26 meeting, we were told that there were “concerns, but not complaints” about the department brought forward to HR. We were told we could not know who filed the concerns or the nature of them, but that we would likely be given an update by the end of the week. We received no update from HR on this issue. However, on May 30, I was told by you that four of our team were now under investigation for an official complaint but, again, I was not allowed to know who or what. I have recently found out that the “concerns” were allowed to grow into a “complaint,” which ultimately resulted in a resignation. It was several weeks after the resignation that we were informed of the complaint and that we were now under investigation. How were we to address the concerns before they morphed into a complaint if no one talked to us? We finally received a copy of the complaint on August 7, 2025 (after having been denied repeatedly over the past months). Yet, we were still required to sit for interviews with the investigator for the previous weeks without ever knowing the source of the investigation or the allegations continued within. This feels quite suspect and has been devastating to morale. There also remains the concern regarding equity for the Deputy Chief Communications Officer’s position ranking and how it is the only deputy/assistant director in the organization with that level of disparate pay compared to the director. This has been discussed for nearly three years and remains unresolved.

While I have assuredly made errors in recruiting and leading team members, I can assure you that I have always tried my absolute best and without the support of the institutional departments whose mission it is to offer assistance in these areas. We have to fight every day – in every room we are in – just to do our jobs. The “dealer has changed” in the last few years, and the cards are now stacked against us. As you know, I spoke with the Mayor in March of this year, and you in May, to communicate that I was feeling that my utility to this organization had changed and that I would offer my resignation if that was the best option. During both conversations, it was communicated that such action was not desired, with the Mayor candidly saying he would not accept it. In both conversations, the Mayor and you both stated separately that I was needed to lead the CommsGA Team forward.

However, the stress, anxiety, lack of support and harassment that has occurred over the last five months have been nothing short of debilitating for our team, especially its leadership group. The demonstrated lack of care (coupled with a complete lack of communication) surrounding the circumstances of the last several months is astonishing. Through this lack of communication, I have been rendered powerless to reassure or provide any information to our team members on the way forward. This is not only a recipe for disaster; rather, it is the roadmap for personal and professional strangulation. This has resulted in a hostile work environment with toxicity interlaced at many levels.

During this time, I have been asked to lie to a duly-appointed member of a City board, asked if I was going to watch “the shit show” of a publicly-broadcast Human Rights Commission meeting, subjected to a five-month inquisition in which I was not told the source or details until very late last week, told that I did not belong in this organization because of my drive and work ethic, berated publicly for overtime compensation during emergencies (yet never acknowledged for donating thousands and thousands of hours during non-emergent times) and rendered unable to offer protection for one of my team members who was physically concerned for their safety as a result of another employee’s actions (underlying issues which were corroborated by law enforcement). I was blatantly told that the organization could not afford the CommsGA Team and that it never could. It was also shared to me that the memorial video our team created of Jake Wallin (which garnered millions of views worldwide) was an example of work that was being done that wasn’t needed; it was asked “how many other police departments would make a video like that for a police officer that was only on the job for a few weeks?”

As a result of many conversations with you and others over the last several months – and the lack of any progress thereafter – I am regrettably offering my resignation as Chief Communications Officer for The City of Fargo effective at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, August 17, 2025. I am assuredly committed to a successful transition of my duties to whomever you deem appropriate.

Please know this decision was not one that I desired or arrived at easily. I truly believed I was made to do this work and I felt I would retire from this organization. However, when an environment of disrespect is allowed to permeate without action, such as CommsGA Team members being attacked in open meetings by elected officials and department heads, it is absolutely crushing. When CommsGA leadership is tagged for failing to provide a sufficient work-life balance for its team members but senior leadership within the organization (including City Administration) continues to drop projects on the team in the eleventh hour – including evenings and weekends – because they know we will “get it done,” it is more than unfair; rather, it is setting us up for failure.

I truly wish the organization the absolute best in the future. As a Fargo resident, I will continue celebrating this community’s successes while steadfastly hoping its City government will someday return to a place that embraces excellence, instead of our administrative leaders telling our highest performing employees that we collectively need to start being an organization that “does less with less” and lowering expectations across the board. We can – and must – remain the Regional Leader because without Fargo serving in this role, the metro will suffer irreparably. Now is the time for visionary leadership and solutions, not a shrinking from the charge we are entrusted to upkeep. I look forward to being a part of the solution, albeit from a different vantage point.

I stumbled across the following post online in the past month and I feel it is incredibly poignant to share at this time: *Why do Communications leaders rarely sit at the table, when they're the ones who shape the room? Your brand's biggest risk isn't bad press, it's invisible communications. You can't innovate if your message is misunderstood. You can't lead if no one knows where you're going. You can't retain trust if your silence speaks louder. So why are Communications teams still viewed as "support," not strategy? They're brought in after decisions are made. They're expected to "make it sound good." They manage fallout, but not direction. If your Chief Communications Officer only hears the plan after it's signed off, your strategy is already at risk. Every policy, every pivot, every public move, starts and ends with communication. It's not a task; it's a trust bridge.*

Here's what happens when Communications is a true member of the C-Suite:

- 1. Messages align from boardroom to breakroom.*
- 2. Crises are anticipated, not just reacted to.*
- 3. Employees become advocates, not confused bystanders.*
- 4. Transparency becomes a culture, not a campaign.*

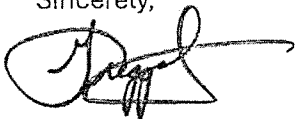
In closing I would like to express my appreciation to the Mayor's Cabinet, Team Fargo, our residents and members of the media. I have had the honor of serving under three different liaison City Commissioners in my time as Chief Communications Officer – Dr. Tim Mahoney, John Strand and Denise Kolpack. While all three were unique in comparison to each other, they all brought new and innovative ideas to our work and were steadfast supporters of the team. They undoubtedly made us better.

It seems only fitting that my last week in this position has been characterized by the chaotic nature of this field. The various law enforcement incidents, coupled with assisting CBS National News with its story on the heroic efforts of the FPD on July 14, 2023, underscore the distinctness of the divergent challenges and joys of this position. There are no right or wrong answers and there is no textbook on the best way to handle a crisis. The work was never easy, but it was work worth doing and I am profoundly grateful for being given the honor over these years.

I would be remiss not to express my sincere appreciation to former City Administrator Bruce Grubb, who fully embraced the need for strategic communications and supported the vision for which Fargo hired me to implement within this organization back in 2016. Bruce represented the "Fargo model" that I have always revered – working your way up through hard work and remaining operationally-grounded by never losing sight of the reason we are all here...to give Fargo the absolutely best that we possibly can.

I tried to live up to that ideal each and every day and am departing the organization knowing I gave Fargo everything I had. I cancelled many vacations due to emerging events, was on-call 24/7 consistently for nearly a decade, donated 720 hours in 2024 and 1,238 hours in 2023 to this organization (hours worked in excess of our contracted 2,080 hours), conducted interviews for new staff members while my Grandma was on hospice care and worked countless holidays so others were able to have the time away. I lived and breathed The City of Fargo; it was my passion, but it ultimately overshadowed everything else in my life. I thought by sacrificing more and more of myself, things would eventually improve for my team, my community and myself. Unfortunately, the opposite has proven to be true and I can no longer do it; this is unsustainable and has adversely impacted my health in numerous ways. It's now time for a change.

Sincerely,



Gregg Schildberger | Chief Communications Officer

cc: Dr. Tim Mahoney | Mayor
Denise Kolpack | Deputy Mayor

August 12, 2025

Dear Gregg,

In 2019, I was hired as a Creative Services Producer. As someone who grew up in Fargo, it was a tremendous honor to have a job where I was able to use my passion and skills to highlight the work that so many excellent employees across the organization were doing, whether it was their first day on the job or they had been here for 50+ years.

Over the years the number of project requests across the organization grew - I rode along with snowplows at night during big storms, I was taught the inner workings of the utilities, our public safety teams brought me on scenes of emergencies and on ride-alongs, as well as requested that I help with recruiting efforts and capturing the stories of our recruits going through our academies. Library and Health worked with me to highlight important programs and services they provide. When there were retirements of employees who dedicated decades of important services to our community, I got to work with them in the final days of work to tell their story. During times of crisis, I was trusted to help put videos together to help explain to the community what was going on, or to tell the stories of the people involved. It was an honor to be given all these opportunities by so many departments who trusted me to put the projects together.

I worked for a CommsGA team that pushed me everyday to be the best version of myself that I could be, while giving me every opportunity they could to have me learn and grow to become a well rounded communications professional. This incredible team hasn't won local, regional and national awards by accident.

While these opportunities used to be supported by leadership in this organization outside of the CommsGA team, the priorities have now clearly shifted in a way where everything we do is now questioned, we are not supported in our department operations and they would rather have us do small projects that nobody notices rather than push ourselves to be the exceptional team that we are.

Due to these changes in the organization, I will be offering my resignation effective at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, August 17, 2025.

As someone who has lived in Fargo my whole life, this city and organization will always have a special place in my heart and I'm sad that it does not feel like a place where I can spend the rest of my career.



Ryan Green
Creative Services Manager

August 12, 2025

Dear Gregg Schildberger,

Please accept this letter as formal notification of my resignation from my position as Project Manager at The City of Fargo, effective Sunday, August 17, 2025 at 11:59 p.m.

I want to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to have worked on the Communications and Governmental Affairs team. I've learned a great deal during my time here and I appreciate the experiences and professional development I've gained. Working alongside the members of Team Fargo has been one of the greatest honors of my life thus far.

My deep commitment to serving this community remains, but I have decided to pursue a new opportunity with an organization that closely aligns with my professional values.

I am committed to ensuring a smooth transition during my remaining time here. Please let me know how I can assist.

Thank you for the opportunity to have worked here. I wish you, Team Fargo, The City of Fargo and the residents of Fargo - whom I was privileged to serve - all the best in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Groth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "G".

Emily Groth

Katie Ettish

08.12.2025

To: Gregg Schildberger
Position: Deputy Chief Communications Officer
The City of Fargo

Subject: Resignation Letter

Gregg,

These past four years have been some of the most meaningful of my career. I've had the opportunity to work on projects I never could have imagined being part of, create lasting memories with people I respect and learn more about communications, leadership and myself than I ever imagined. I leave with a stronger sense of confidence, purpose and perspective because of the opportunities I've had here, many of which were made possible because of your guidance and leadership. For that, I am sincerely grateful.

I have been honored to serve The City of Fargo for four years and had always thought I would spend the rest of my professional career with this organization. This work has mattered to me. I believed in the mission and in the good that public service can bring to a community. In this role, I have had the honor and privilege of hugging and supporting a mother who just lost her son in the line of duty and that has changed me forever; however, the life-long relationship I have developed with Amy Wallin is one that will transcend this job and I will always cherish.

I have given my whole self to this role — time, energy, heart — often going far beyond what the job description required. I've literally given the shoes off my own feet to a colleague. I have given and given and given because I care deeply about the people I work with and the community I serve. That is why it has been heartbreaking to realize that such dedication has not always been met with the same respect, trust or compassion in return from those outside of the CommsGA Team.

Despite my dedication to this role, the ongoing high levels of stress, daily anxiety and a toxic work culture fostered by City Administration and Human Resources have made it impossible for me to continue in good conscience.

The CommsGA Team has repeatedly been excluded from critical strategic communication planning. For example, there was a meeting on November 6, 2024, between City Administration, the Mayor, the Downtown Community Partnership executive director and Forum

Communications. I was made aware of this meeting by the Deputy Mayor, who requested that I attend. Following the meeting, Assistant City Administrator Brenda Derrig addressed me in a stern and scolding tone, stating, "You should not have come here."

In another instance, City Commissioner Piepkorn verbally attacked both of us following a public meeting on the public safety sales tax on May 14, 2025. A press conference was scheduled immediately afterward, and we were responsible for ensuring it ran smoothly. As we attempted to coordinate with the Fire Chief – who was speaking with the commissioner at the time – the commissioner berated us in front of other commissioners and senior staff. When this was brought to the attention of City Administration, no action was taken.

Seeing an elected official use the media to politicize and cast public employees in a negative light – seemingly for political advantage – has been devastating. Coupled with repeated public attacks on the CommsGA Team by local media, without any visible support from City Administration, these actions have taken a significant toll. Over time, experiences like these change a person – they change how you work, how you parent, how you sleep and how you live.

I have repeatedly raised concerns regarding my safety and well-being related to a coworker's behavior. These concerns were not abstract – they were real, repeated and distressing. And yet, they were ignored. And although you, Gregg, have been extremely supportive in these matters, the lack of meaningful support from City Administration and Human Resources not only failed to improve the situation – it actively allowed it to deteriorate further. The silence and inaction have sent a clear message about whose voices they hear and whose well-being is prioritized. The lack of response from City Administration and Human Resources hasn't just been disappointing – it's made a difficult situation worse.

I want to be clear, my decision to accept another position was made well before the events of August 3, 2025. This resignation is not a reaction to that day, it is about a longer, more personal reckoning with what I need in order to thrive – in my work, and as a mom and a person. I cannot continue to work in an environment where professional and personal well-being are disregarded by those who are tasked with strategically leading this organization; the allowance of systemic issues to be allowed to go unacknowledged and unresolved is the root of our challenges at The City of Fargo.

I am tired of having to defend myself – and the work of the CommsGA Team – every time I walk into a room. Contrary to popular opinion, CommsGA is not the problem; we are the ones holding this organization together and building relationships across departments. We are the unifiers not the dividers.

This decision wasn't easy. It's hard to walk away from a role where I've invested so much of myself. The constant pressure placed on the Communications and Governmental Affairs Department by others and unaddressed toxicity described above have significantly affected

both my personal life and my ability to spend time with my children. My kids deserve more of me. I deserve more of me. And I need a change.

While this decision is difficult, it is necessary for my health, well-being and family. I hope this resignation underscores the urgency for the organization to address the ongoing challenges that affect employees at all levels. My final day with The City of Fargo will be Sunday, August 17, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie Ettish". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Katie Ettish