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In Lawsuit, Former Magens Bay GM Says “No Nonsense” Attitude Angered Chair Who Plotted With Others to Unfairly Dismiss Him

Claims detail how adherence to rules sparked board chair's ire, leading to wrongful termination accusations

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Magens Bay in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands. By. GETTY IMAGES

The Magens Bay Authority is the subject of a lawsuit filed by its former general manager, alleging wrongful dismissal.

Hubert Brumant was appointed as general manager of the authority in 2007, and says that he received consistent positive feedback for his work until November 2021, when Barbara Petersen,

named as a co-defendant in the lawsuit, became chair of the authority. The civil suit alleges that Ms. Petersen, as well as some other members of the board, began plotting to remove Mr. Brumant as general manager because he was “no nonsense”, and as such refused to deviate from the authority’s rules and regulatory procedures. As a result of their alleged machinations, he was suspended in February 2023 and terminated less than a month later.

Mr. Brumant’s lawyers describe a scenario in which Ms. Petersen assigned several tasks to the former general manager in January 2022, which were to be completed within 90 days. These were allegedly completed within the stipulated timeframe, but the requested documents were not collected by Ms. Petersen until a further three months had elapsed, in June of 2022. By that time, Mr. Brumant says he had completed an additional two administrative documents that he had decided of his own volition to work on. He says he received no feedback on the work until the February 2023 board meeting during which he was suspended. One of the reasons given for his suspension was information allegedly relayed to the board by Ms. Petersen that Mr. Brumant had completed only one of the tasks given to him the year prior.

Ms. Petersen reportedly failed to heed her general manager’s warning about the impending expiration of a taxi concession agreement. Subsequently, she allegedly lied to the board when the lapsed agreement was discovered. During the February 2023 board meeting, she stated that this was the first time she had been made aware of the need for renewal. This is despite Mr. Brumant’s claims that he had first begun to remind her of the issue in October 2022.

The lawsuit also describes an incident when Jason Charles, a member of the board and named as a co-defendant, attempted to remit less than the required venue rental fee for Magens Bay for an event he had booked. In response, Mr. Brumant reportedly emailed the board’s finance chair Cecile de Jongh, as well as Ms. Petersen, to inform them that Mr. Charles would have to pay the full price as stipulated. That reportedly angered Mr. Charles, who subsequently voted to remove Mr. Brumant from his position, according to documents filed in court.

Following his suspension, Ms. Petersen reportedly asked Mr. Brumant to sign some checks on behalf of the authority, which he did, but later took umbrage at his offer to approve payroll since, despite his suspension, as agency head he remained the only person authorized to do so. An email from Ms. Petersen followed his outreach to the authority’s business manager, accusing him of violating his suspension, despite her earlier request for him to perform work on the authority’s behalf.

During his four-week term of suspension, Mr. Brumant received a letter terminating his employment. “That letter gave no grounds for Plaintiff’s termination,” the lawsuit claims. Following the issuance of the letter, Mr. Brumant claims that board members made up spurious reasons to justify his termination, including accusing him of supposed improprieties that he says were widely-held practices at the authority.

As a result of the actions taken against him, Mr. Brumant is suing for wrongful termination, defamation, intentional infliction of emotional distress, breach of duty on the part of Magens Bay Authority, and tortious interference with contractual relations on the part of Ms. Petersen and Mr. Charles. He is asking the courts to award compensatory and punitive damages inclusive of pre- and post-judgement interest, as well as other costs and fees.

The defendants have denied all the allegations made by Mr. Brumant, and claim that he actually owed them damages that are more than the sum he claims are owed to him. Further, they claim that the employment contract between Magens Bay Authority and Mr. Brumant precludes such

legal action, as he was employed in an “at will” capacity. Additionally, Mr. Brumant was rightfully terminated “for malfeasance,” Magens Bay Authority claims, accusing him of engaging in “unlawful conduct which undermined the integrity of the position he held as the General Manager.”

Plaintiff and defendants now await the court’s ruling on a proposed schedule for the matter, which anticipates that the case will be ready for trial by May 2025.

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