

September 14, 2018

Dear Members of the Board of Directors of Renew Inc./WINGS Safehouse,

This letter concerns board members Terrie Williams, Sharon Souza, Martha Robinson, Orly Lucero, and Roy Lane. Current and former staff and concerned community members are providing you this letter to express our grievances with the operations and actions of the named members of the Renew Inc./WINGS Safehouse Board. Due to the negligence, clear incompetence, and illegal actions of the named board members, as described below, the undersigned are requesting their immediate resignation from the Board of Directors.

Failure to Understand Fiduciary Duties

No fundraising and little participation in fundraising efforts. During investigations after the firing of the former Executive Director and in consultations with funders, the board has shown no knowledge of organization financial, including budgets and salaries.

Failure to Provide Effective Oversight:

Staff were unaware of the identities and contacts of board members. No effort was made by the board to meet staff. Multiple staff were at the agency for over seven months before meeting even one member of the Board.

Failing to Hold Executives Accountable:

The Board of Directors gave former Executive Director, Cheryl Beene, a glowing review in May 2018 without ever visiting agency or speaking to staff while Beene was stealing funds and goods, treating clients with disrespect, and using emotionally abusive behavior against staff.

Insufficient Conflict Management:

Board members failed to recognize and address conflicts of interest, including the presence of Roy Lane and Martha Robinson of the Cortez Police Department on the board. These members of the board are not covered by advocate privilege (Colo. Rev. Stat. § 13-90-107) and have access to privileged information concerning Renew clients which could be used in investigations and a court of law.

Additionally, the spouse of Orly Lucero is actively employed by Renew.

Failure to Educate Board Members:

Orly Lucero and Roy Lane have never taken the trainings in domestic violence and sexual assault required by the bylaws and by confidentiality law, and Sharon Souza has never completed the training.

Failure to Cultivate Board Diversity:

Board has made no attempt to recruit new members, much less members representative of the diverse community that Renew serves.

Board members have no limits to the number of terms they can serve, with multiple members having served on the board since as far back as the 1990's, leading to stagnation, close-mindedness, and complacency.

Failure to Evaluate Program Effectiveness and Take Appropriate Follow-Up Actions:

In the past five years, at least four different employees contacted the board on two distinct occasions, including with written letters, to report inappropriate actions and gross mismanagement by the former Executive Director. In one instance no steps were taken, and in the other she was given a brief probationary period with no follow-up with staff. When questioned in July 2018 Terrie Williams and Martha Robinson later dismissed these complaints as employee squabbles.

The Board of Directors has never been reviewed.

Inappropriate and Discriminatory Behavior:

On September 8, 2018 Orly Lucero made a public comment comparing an employee's half-Navajo child, who was napping due to a blood sugar level of over 400, to a sleeping homeless person in the park. This comment was incredibly offensive to the employee because of common stereotypes associating Native people with public intoxication and homelessness. After her child left, he returned to ask, "Did you send her to the park with the rest of 'em?"

On Friday September 7, 2018 Terrie Williams, board president asked to speak to an advocate who had filed a discrimination claim. Terrie asked the advocate if she had dropped the claim, and the advocate informed her that she had not. Terrie informed the advocate that "2 other board members" felt that it was a conflict of interest for her to continue working for the agency while her claim was open. The advocate explained retaliation to Terrie and the potential legal ramifications that could hold. The following Monday, September 10, 2018 Terrie contacted the safehouse program director and asked her to terminate employment for the employee with the open discrimination claim. Terrie stated that the SPD could use the verbiage "lay off" if she chose, since the employee could come back to work as soon as the claim was dropped. Terrie discharged the employee as a direct result of her claim in violation of labor law (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and by the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act). Discharging

this employee has halted the agency's ability to recruit and train qualified employees and volunteers, with three new employees currently ineligible for advocate privilege. This decision threatens Renew's ability to continue to provide services to the community.

Every day our staff is striving to grow the agency in a positive direction, only to be thwarted by inaction and lack of support from the board. We are putting our tears, hearts, and souls into making Renew the most effective and affirming agency it can be. The named board members are stifling the growth of the agency and jeopardizing its survival through their actions. For the sake of the agency, we thank you for your service and we request your resignation effective September 18, 2018 at 12:00pm.

Signed,

Members of Renew Staff and Cortez Community

CC: Brooke Ely-Milen, Domestic Violence Program (DVP)  
Jacque Morse, Violence Free Colorado  
Gail Binkly, Four Corners Free Press  
Daniel Rayzel, KSJD  
Jim Mimiaga, The Cortez Journal