

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA	)	IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
	)	
COUNTY OF BEAUFORT	)	CIVIL ACTION NO.: 2020-CP-07-
	)	
MARIA WALLS,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	<b>SUMMONS</b>
	)	(Jury Trial Demanded)
	)	
BEAUFORT COUNTY and JAMES	)	
BECKERT, INDIVIDUALLY AND IN HIS	)	
OFFICIAL CAPACITY,	)	
	)	
Defendants.	)	

**TO THE ABOVE-NAMED:**

**YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED** and required to answer the complaint herein, a copy of which is herewith served upon you, and to serve a copy of your answer to this complaint upon the subscriber, at P.O. Box 457, Hampton, SC 29924, within thirty (30) days after service hereof, exclusive of the day of such service, and if you fail to answer the complaint, judgment by default will be rendered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint.

PETERS, MURDAUGH, PARKER, ELTZROTH  
& DETRICK, P.A.

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ATTORNEYS FOR PLAINTIFF

August 17, 2020  
Hampton, South Carolina

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COUNTY OF BEAUFORT	)	CIVIL ACTION NO.: 2020-CP-07-
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Plaintiff,	)	
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v.	)	(Jury Trial Demanded)
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BECKERT, INDIVIDUALLY AND IN	)	
HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	
_____	)	

Plaintiff alleges:

1. Plaintiff (“Walls”) is a citizen and resident of Beaufort County, South Carolina. Walls is the elected Treasurer for Beaufort County – she is bringing this lawsuit both in her individual capacity and official capacity.
2. Defendant Beaufort County (“Beaufort County” or “the County”) is subject to the jurisdiction of this Court as a political subdivision of this State and subject to suit pursuant to the South Carolina Torts Claims Act.
3. Defendant James “Jim” Beckert (“Beckert”) is a citizen and resident of Beaufort County, South Carolina. Beckert is the elected Auditor for Beaufort County, elected pursuant to the Constitution of the State of South Carolina, the laws of the State of South Carolina, and local law – he is sued in both his individual capacity and in his official capacity as Auditor of Beaufort County, South Carolina.
4. Beaufort County provides office space located at 100 Ribaut Road, Beaufort, South Carolina 29902 (“Government Admin Building”) to both the Treasurer’s and Auditor’s offices to enable these elected officials to serve the citizens of Beaufort County, South Carolina.

5. This lawsuit is being brought after years of Beckert harassing, bullying, defaming and threatening Walls. Prior to this lawsuit, Walls exhausted all other resources, including informing and/or seeking help from the Beaufort County Administrator (past and present), the Deputy County Administrator, Beaufort County Council members, the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office, the County Attorney, the County's Human Resources Department and others.

6. Beckert's conduct, seemingly permitted by the County, created a hostile work environment<sup>1</sup> permeated with discriminatory intimidation, ridicule and insult, severe enough to alter the conditions of Walls' work environment, along with that of County employees', and create an abusive working environment. In fact, multiple employees have resigned due to Beckert's inappropriate, bully-like and abusive behavior.

7. Beaufort County is a party to this lawsuit because it owes a duty to its employees and the elected officials working on County property to provide a safe, non-hostile workplace free from bullying, intimidation, threats and other forms of abuse that create a hostile environment. Further, Beaufort County specifically assumed a duty to protect Walls from a hostile and harassing environment while carrying out her duties as Treasurer.

8. Beaufort County has failed to provide a safe and non-hostile work environment for its employees and Walls despite its longstanding knowledge and recognition that Beckert has systematically, for years, harassed and intimidated Walls and County employees.

9. Former County employees describe Beckert as a bully, totalitarian and abusive especially toward women.

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<sup>1</sup> The very nature of a hostile work environment is that it involves repeated conduct that cannot occur in a single day, but occurs over days, weeks, months and/or years.

10. Walls and Beckert first met on Saturday, March 29, 2014 at the Unity Celebration, at which Walls was speaking. As Walls made her way to the podium, Beckert intercepted her and informed Walls that he was running for Beaufort County Auditor. During this interaction, Beckert told Walls that if she didn't step on his toes, he wouldn't stomp on hers. Before Walls could process Beckert's outburst, her speech was beginning, and she had to rush on stage. Walls was visibly nervous throughout her speech due to Beckert's threat.

11. On May 5, 2014, the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday Republican Club hosted a luncheon where Walls (then-Deputy Treasurer) spoke and read a letter of endorsement on behalf of then-Treasurer, Douglas Henderson, Walls' boss who'd asked that Walls represent him at the luncheon. After Walls read the endorsement, she returned to her seat to hear Beckert, also seated at Walls' table, accusing her of breaking the law, threatening to expose Walls and stating he would make sure Walls was held accountable.

12. On May 19, 2014, Beckert falsely accused Walls of utilizing taxpayer funded time and resources at a campaign event. These false accusations were made to then-County Administrator, Gary Kubic. Despite being informed by County Administration that Walls' actions were not in violation of any policy or statute, Beckert contacted local media with these allegations that he knew to be false.

13. Subsequently, Walls was contacted by the Island Packet regarding the false accusations made by Beckert. Beckert failed to inform the Island Packet of County Administration's determination that Walls had not violated any policy or statute.

14. Despite Beckert's false accusations directed at Walls, Walls reached out to Beckert multiple times to assist him in his transition to the Auditor's Office, offering to work together in a productive manner.

15. On April 27, 2015, Walls received a phone call from Sharon Burris, then-County Auditor – Sharon Burris called to warn Walls of Beckert. Sharon Burris stated that while in the Auditor’s Office, Beckert *often* made threats about coming after Walls and putting Walls in “her place.” Other members of the Auditor’s Office heard these comments as well.

16. Upon Beckert taking office, his behavior escalated.

17. Beckert would intentionally intercept Walls between her office and the restroom to discuss matters that displeased him using threatening verbiage and body language.

18. After multiple office-related issues with Beckert, Walls and Beckert met with County Administration on August 12, 2015, to discuss the County’s tax process and how to proceed. Beckert was unwilling to move forward in a professional manner.

19. After the August 12, 2015 meeting, Walls was contacted by County Council Chairman, Paul Sommerville, who informed Walls that Beckert told Council that Walls would relinquish a portion of her office’s budget – Walls never agreed to such.

20. Wanting to discuss Beckert’s false statements along with other office and tax related issues, Walls agreed to meet with Beckert again.

21. On August 14, 2015, Walls and Beckert met, alone, to discuss several office-related items. During the meeting, Beckert held an envelope in his lap, which he took notes on. However, Walls observed a recording device with a red light concealed in the envelope – Beckert was secretly recording their meeting. Throughout the meeting, Beckert’s only substantive comments were to threaten legal action if Walls opposed his way of doing things. This meeting is one of the many times Beckert’s tone and demeanor made Walls feel uncomfortable and threatened.



*The video stills above show Beckert attempting to conceal his recording device in an envelope.*

22. Walls did not confront Beckert about the recording device during the meeting for fear of how he would react and/or behave while they were alone, however immediately after the August 14, 2015 meeting, Walls called Josh Gruber, then-Deputy County Administrator, to inform him of the meeting and that Beckert recorded it. Beckert has refused to provide a copy of the recording and/or notes despite Walls' request.

23. Beckert continuously made false accusations of impropriety against Walls during the weekend of September 12, 2015. After several County Officials were contacted by Beckert, a meeting was called and facilitated by County Council Chairman, Paul Sommerville, on September 14, 2015.

24. At the September 14, 2015 meeting, Beckert requested that he record the meeting and presented the same recording device he attempted to conceal at he and Walls' August 14, 2015 meeting. Mr. Sommerville attempted to clarify Beckert's concerns with little success due to Beckert's inability to communicate a valid concern. Mr. Sommerville also revealed that Beckert had contacted the Solicitor and the Beaufort County Sheriff's Office with these false accusations against Walls. The Solicitor confirmed this to Walls on September 17, 2015.

25. Beckert soon began questioning anyone with whom Walls had contact with, professionally and personally, including a personal friend who entered into the Auditor's Office to request an updated vehicle tax bill and was questioned by Beckert about Walls for more than forty-five (45) minutes.

26. In September and October of 2015, Beckert opposed legal counsel's interpretation of a statute and began telling taxpayers that Walls had illegally collected their taxes because proper notice was not given. This misinformation prompted Walls and legal counsel to reach out to Beckert in an attempt to correct his misinterpretation to no avail. In response, Beckert posted to the Auditor's page, on the County's website, to write false and defamatory statements about Walls and the Treasurer's Office acting inappropriately and illegally.

27. From late 2015 through early 2016, Beckert attempted to force the continued collection of tax bills that were over ten (10) years old in violation of state law. Walls informed Beckert that taxes over ten (10) years old were uncollectable and needed to be removed by the Auditor's Office but Beckert refused to remove them. As a result, the Treasurer's Office removed them. Beckert responded with threats of legal action and public scrutiny.

28. On April 8, 2016, Beckert emailed County Council requesting to speak in Executive Session regarding concerns he had with the legality of the County's taxation process. County

Council determined that no illegal activity was occurring and denied his request. Notwithstanding, Beckert continued making unfounded false accusations against Walls to County Council.

29. Beckert's outrageous conduct has continuously progressed over time.

30. Beckert's behavior caused Walls such concern that on August 5, 2016, she submitted a Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") request for Beckert's personnel file with the County.

31. Beckert attempted to prevent Walls from obtaining his personnel file incorrectly alleging that his personnel file was not subject to FOIA, however, Walls obtained a copy.

32. Beckert's personnel file revealed that between March of 2010 and November of 2014 (when he was elected Auditor), Beckert applied for twenty-four (24) positions within Beaufort County, including: Head Lifeguard, Summer Lifeguard, Part-Time Lifeguard, Judicial Tech, Judicial Clerk, and at least three (3) positions in the Beaufort County Treasurer's Office.

33. Beckert was hired for only two (2) of these positions – Judicial Tech and Summer Lifeguard (temp). However, Beckert was fired from the Judicial Tech position after only a few weeks due to his "level of performance decreasing as time passes."

34. Beckert and his family later sued Walls and the County for the County's improper redaction of personal information contained in his personnel file. Beckert sued Walls despite knowing Walls played no part in redacting his personnel file and Walls filed an affidavit stating she did not share or distribute its contents to anyone.

35. In 2016, Beckert began to take frequent (multiple times per week) walks past Walls' office window, often just standing and watching Walls work in an attempt to make Walls feel uncomfortable and/or unsafe. Walls would feel as if someone were watching her only to look up



and see Beckert glaring at her. Walls noticing Beckert did not prompt him to walk away, instead he would remain standing there, in an attempt to intimidate and bully Walls.

36. On the morning of September 20, 2016, Walls observed Beckert staring at her through her window. Later that same day, Beckert sent Walls an email letting her know that he was aware that she was “in the building.”

37. That same month, September of 2016, Beckert was glaring at Walls through her window, unbeknownst to Walls until her co-worker noticed and shouted in surprise.

38. On November 10, 2016, Beckert was caught staring at Walls through her window, at which point, Walls alerted County Administration. This is just one instance County Administration was alerted to Beckert’s inappropriate and threatening behavior. Walls informed County Administration multiple times to no avail – Walls was informed there was nothing County Administration could do as Beckert is an elected official.

39. Following more of Beckert’s false accusations and harassment, an Executive Committee meeting was held on September 12, 2016. Beckert refused to follow the protocol established at the meeting and began sending letters in April of 2017 to certain taxpayers falsely accusing and misrepresenting actions taken by the Treasurer’s Office and County Administration.

40. In March of 2017, Beckert falsely accused Walls of violating state law in how Walls’ predecessor, Douglas Henderson, addressed a delinquent local utility. Beckert also falsely informed members of the Beaufort County School Board that Walls’ and the Treasurer’s Office’s newly implemented delinquent collections method would reduce the School Board’s tax revenue.

41. Multiple County Council Members had become aware of Beckert’s attacks and harassment of Walls as well as several female employees of the County.

42. In March of 2017, County Administration installed an exterior security camera outside of Walls' office window along with a camera at the opposite end of the building in an attempt to document and/or deter Beckert's behavior towards Walls.

43. The cameras seemed to deter Beckert from glaring into Walls' window for a short amount of time – Beckert resumed this disturbing behavior, continuously, in January of 2020.

44. However, after the cameras' installation, Beckert began intercepting Walls in the hallway much more frequently than before. For example, Beckert began standing in the doorway of his department waiting for Walls to pass by so that he could intercept and accost her between one to three times per week. Each time this occurred, Beckert was aggressive and bully-like.

45. Beckert did not intercept Walls by chance – Beckert used the County's hallway security cameras to stalk Walls' movements and accost her when possible. Beckert is known for improperly using the County's cameras to intercept others, especially women. Beckert's access to cameras has been revoked due to his disturbing, inappropriate use.

46. On October 31, 2017, Beckert posted to Facebook<sup>2</sup>, via the Auditor's page, that the Treasurer (Walls) and Interim Administrator were not able to follow their own timeline for tax notices as their "lawless protocol" called for tax notices to be in the mail, but are now delayed.  
Ex. A.

47. In December of 2017, Beckert made multiple concerning statements regarding Walls' health and pregnancy – Beckert learned of Walls' pregnancy on December 13, 2017 at a community meeting hosted by Councilman, York Glover. At the meeting, Walls spoke, during which, Beckert recorded Walls on his cell phone and continued recording and/or taking photos of

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<sup>2</sup> Beckert began using Facebook as another forum for his bullying, threats, misinformation and defamation when the County noticed his inappropriate posts on the County's website via the Auditor's page.

her after she took a seat in the audience. County Councilman, Paul Sommerville, was present at the meeting. Both Walls and Paul Sommerville witnessed Beckert's behavior. Beckert expressed shock and interest in Walls' state and her abdomen. A few days later, Beckert followed Walls out of the building, asking about her pregnancy and eerily stated that he hoped nothing bad happened to her while she was out of the office or driving home from work one day.



*The photo above shows Beckert recording Walls at the December 13, 2017 meeting.*

48. The December 13, 2017 meeting is just one instance of Beckert recording Walls. Beckert has recorded and/or photographed Walls in meetings and outside of the office on multiple occasions.

49. A few days after the December 13, 2017 meeting, Beckert observed a member of Walls' staff sitting in the hallway, while on break. He approached her and began asking her if Walls was really pregnant. When the staff member failed to entertain Beckert's ridiculous

inquiries, Beckert told the staff member, in a chilling manner, that it would “be a shame if things didn’t go well for [Walls].”

50. Beckert’s threats directed to Walls’ physical well-being and pregnancy led Walls to consult the Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office. Walls explained her previous interactions with Beckert and his behavior. Walls was informed that because Beckert was an elected official, there was very little that could be done – the Sheriff thought that even him speaking to Beckert would only embolden Beckert’s behavior. The Sheriff, in response to Walls’ safety concerns, offered to have officers, or himself, present at her speaking engagements. The Sheriff also encouraged Walls to keep the Sheriff’s Office and County Administration informed of any interactions.

51. Because of Beckert’s behavior, Walls does not go anywhere on County property alone in fear for her safety. Walls also began strategically parking her vehicle with her door visible to a building door when she arrives at work. Walls stopped attending events alone because of the hostility and safety concerns posed by Beckert.

52. On December 27, 2017, Walls was informed that Beckert had made false accusations against Walls to County Council yet again. Beckert wrote to the Finance Committee falsely accusing Walls and the Treasurer’s Office of violating state law with regard to the collection of delinquent taxes. Walls had to respond to these unfounded accusations at a Finance Committee meeting on February 5, 2018 and again on February 13, 2018.

53. On January 31, 2018, Beckert posted on Facebook, via the Beaufort County Auditor’s page, falsely accusing Walls and the Treasurer’s Office of charging unwarranted penalties. Beckert goes on to state that some taxpayer’s unwarranted penalty charges will slip through the cracks as the Auditor’s Office, being the only office ensuring the taxpayer is not overcharged, cannot catch all the penalty charges.

54. In January and February of 2018, Beckert publicly published at County Council and School Board Meetings that Walls violated the law by removing taxes that were uncollectable (older than ten (10) years). In conjunction with these accusations, Beckert wrote letters to both the County's and the School District's external auditors falsely accusing Walls of negatively impacting the audited financial statements of both the County and the School District.

55. On March 2, 2018, Beckert posted on Facebook, via the Beaufort County Auditor's page, falsely accusing Walls of doing "backroom collection deals" as well as failing to perform her job duties, not collecting taxes, and violating state law. Ex. B.

56. Beckert also filed a Complaint with South Carolina LLR, which governs Walls' CPA license, his complaint was meritless and was filed as a part of Beckert's efforts to intimidate Walls.

57. On December 26, 2019, Beckert emailed County Council and made additional false accusations and demands against Walls, the County Administrator, and the IT Department relating to a the testing and implementation of a programming change in the County's taxation software. Because the programming change was not installed when Beckert wanted it to be installed, Beckert accused Walls of trying to usurp the authority of the Auditor's Office, when in fact, Walls was attempting ensure the program was adequately tested and functioning properly. Walls was forced to respond and/or defend herself to County Council.

58. On January 10, 2020, Walls received a phone call from Brian Flewelling, County Councilman, who attempted to act as an intermediary between Walls and Beckert in light of Beckert's inability to refrain from being bullylike and "abusive" to both Walls and the County Administrator. Councilman Flewelling's interest arose when Beckert accosted the Beaufort County Administrator, an employee under Councilman Flewelling. During the discussion,

Councilman Flewelling described Beckert as a “jerk,” when speaking of Beckert’s behavior, and informed Walls “it’s worse than you know.”

59. Also in January of 2020, watercraft taxpayers presented Walls’ office with a letter sent out by Beckert intentionally and falsely accusing Walls and the County Administrator of corrupting the tax process. The County allowed this letter to be sent to taxpayers despite Walls’ warning – Walls, having knowledge of Beckert’s tendency to misinform the taxpayers via letter (County letterhead), warned the County to monitor the mailroom. Beckert’s sole purpose behind sending the letter was damaging the reputation of Walls and the Treasurer’s Office. Walls shared the letter with County Council along with her response. Ex. C.

60. Beckert’s continuous publications of false and defamatory statements about Walls and County employees has forced Walls and County employees to spend inordinate amounts of time and resources defending themselves to meritless accusations rather than the performance of job duties. Beckert’s false accusations are made using taxpayer dollars and the inordinate amount of time required to respond to his false accusations cost taxpayer money for Walls and County employees.

61. Not only has Beckert’s behavior impacted County employees, but also vendors that do business with the County. Beckert has threatened and/or bullied vendors’ employees to the point that some vendors will no longer conduct business with the Auditor’s Office. One vendor took it upon itself to ask Walls whether she feared for her safety. Ex. D.

62. On January 29, 2020 Beckert stormed across the Courthouse green in a direct trajectory, disregarding walkways and/or sidewalks, scaling a retaining wall, to Walls’ window. Walls, along with two (2) County employees, noticed Beckert about halfway across the lawn – he glared at her throughout this spectacle until he walked out of sight.



*The video stills above were taken from the County's exterior cameras, placed outside of Walls' office. These video stills represent a more recent example of Beckert's behavior in 2020.*

63. On February 25, 2020, Walls and Beckert attended a meeting of the Forfeited Land Commission. When Walls took her seat, Beckert began battering Walls with vague and irrelevant questions that were not germane to the conversation. When Walls asked for clarification, Beckert became visibly angry and remained rude and condescending throughout the meeting.

64. The February 25, 2020 meeting of the Forfeited Land Commission upset Walls greatly given Beckert's behavior such that Walls was visibly shaking. After the meeting, another

meeting participant came to Walls' office to make sure she was alright and commented on Beckert's inappropriate behavior.

65. On February 27, 2020, Walls consulted with outside counsel regarding a letter received from an attorney representing the Auditor's Office. Outside counsel expressed concern for Walls' safety given Beckert's behavior, strongly urging Walls to reach out to the Sheriff's Department and report his behavior yet again.

66. Walls met with the Sheriff's Office for a second time on March 2, 2020. Walls was informed that she could file a Complaint with SLED. After the March 2, 2020 meeting, Walls reached out to a private investigator with an extensive career in law enforcement, who informed Walls that Beckert had also made corruption accusations against Walls to the FBI. The accusations were found to be meritless.

67. On March 4, 2020, Beckert once again approached Walls' window to glare at her in an attempt to make her feel unsafe and/or intimidate her.

68. Throughout Walls' tenure, she has been subjected to frequent, unwelcome verbal attacks and harassment by Beckert.

69. Walls informed County officials on numerous occasions about Beckert's abusive and threatening behavior in an attempt to have the County provide a safe non-hostile workplace for the Treasurer's Office and County employees.

70. In addition to requests from Walls, individual County employees have sought protection from Beckert's conduct because of the hostile environment that he has single handedly created within Beaufort County Government.



71. Further, numerous County officials have witnessed Beckert's conduct and have actual knowledge that Walls and County employees are working in an environment that is not in compliance with the non-hostile work environment policy of the County.

72. Despite having actual knowledge of the hostile environment created by Beckert and the negative impacts to those subjected to Beckert and the negative impact to the taxpayer, County government has been unresponsive and turned its head and abrogated its absolute duty to provide a safe workplace.

73. The County's failure to provide a safe non-hostile workplace has caused Walls to work in fear for her personal safety and in a constant state of fear and anxiety resulting in physical and other related damage, including damage to her reputation.

74. As a result of Beckert's long standing pattern of abusive acts and defamatory publications, Walls has been forced to defend herself in public and to both County Council and the School Board on multiple occasions to respond to meritless accusations. Walls has also suffered injury to her person, damage to her reputation, her character, her political career, fear, distress as a result of Beckert's conduct set forth herein.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION – NEGLIGENCE  
(AGAINST BEAUFORT COUNTY)

75. Walls realleges and reincorporates all preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

76. Beckert harassed, defamed, assaulted, and intimidated Walls on the County's premises, often with the County's property (i.e., computer, letterhead, email, and through the County's website).

77. Walls was one of several of Beckert's victims. Beckert has treated multiple female county employees in a condescending, derogatory, aggressive and bully-like manner. As a result, past and current employees work in constant fear of Beckert and his erratic, threatening behavior.

78. Beckert's behavior was reported to many County officials in various departments. Walls was repeatedly informed by the Sheriff, the County Administrator and County Council that nothing could be done to Beckert due to his status as an elected official.

79. Upon information and belief, the County maintains a file of complaints and/or grievances against Beckert.

80. The County has a duty to provide a safe working environment for its employees and elected officials whose offices reside on County property.

81. The County enabled Beckert in continuing to allow him to use County property to make false accusations against Walls and County employees. Beckert uses County letterhead to defame Walls via letters to the taxpayers. Beckert uses the County's mailroom to send letters to taxpayers containing defamatory and false accusations against Walls – this use of County resources wastes both taxpayer's time and money. Beckert's access to the County's website remains unencumbered despite Beckert defaming Walls and Walls' office on the Auditor's page of the County's website. Beckert maintains a county computer and/or email address despite using both to defame Walls and County employees. The County's nonchalant attitude towards Beckert's disturbing, bully-like and abusive behavior toward Walls and County employees, especially women, has enabled Beckert to continue this inappropriate behavior.

82. Beckert continues to harass, defame, assault and intimidate Walls on County property with County property.

83. As a result, Walls sustained injuries and damages, including but not limited to fear, anxiety and distress.

84. Walls' injuries and damages complained of were due to and proximately caused by the negligence, grossly negligent action and inaction of the County in the following particulars:

- a. In failing to properly maintain its premises such that employees and others working thereon were assured of a safe, non-hostile work environment;
- b. In failing to properly secure its premises;
- c. In maintaining and managing an unsafe hostile environment on its premises in violation of County policy;
- d. In failing to exercise reasonable care in the performance of its security measures, methods and procedures;
- e. In failing to properly maintain its property (i.e. email, letterhead and/or website) to prevent the misuse thereof to harm others all in violation of its policies;
- f. In voluntarily undertaking a duty to protect Walls on the premises from Beckert's behavior, but failing to properly use and implement those protections for Walls' safety;
- g. In failing to protect Walls when it knew that Beckert's behavior and conduct on its premises posed a substantial and unreasonable risk of harm to Walls;
- h. In failing to relocate the Auditor's Office from the County Administration building to protect Walls and County employees who come in contact with Beckert.

85. By reason of and in consequence of these negligent, negligent actions and inactions of the County, Walls suffered the injuries and losses complained of herein.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION – ASSUMPTION OF A DUTY  
(AGAINST BEAUFORT COUNTY)

86. Walls realleges and reincorporates all preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

87. When the County installed exterior cameras outside of Walls' office window, it did so solely to deter Beckert's disturbing behavior.

88. After the County installed said cameras, Beckert's behavior continued, long-known and now documented by the County.

89. By installing these cameras, the County assumed the duty to monitor Beckert's outrageous behavior and/or protect Walls.

90. The County also assumed the duty to provide a safe work environment and/or protect Walls via the Beaufort County Personnel Handbook.

91. Both Beckert and Walls, at the request of the County, signed the Beaufort County Personnel Handbook; both signed the handbook in a pledge to provide a healthy, safe work environment for all County employees and others within the County Admin Building.

92. The County warranted to provide a safe working environment, via the Beaufort County Personnel Handbook; Beckert and Walls were required to sign the handbook in order to utilize the County's human resources department. The Beaufort County Personnel Handbook warrants the following:

- a. The County endeavors to provide a working environment in which employees are free from discomfort or pressure resulting from jokes, ridicule, slurs, gossip, threats, bullying and harassment, whether relating to such distinctions or simply resulting from a lack of consideration for a fellow human being;
- b. The County does not tolerate harassment of any kind, and strictly forbids retaliation against anyone who has reported harassment in good faith;
- c. The County, via the handbook, also lists examples of conduct that warrant disciplinary action, including:
  - i. Incompetence;
  - ii. Unauthorized possession or removal, misappropriation, destruction, theft or conversion of County property or the property of others (includes information and electronic files and data);

- iii. Interference with the work of others;
- iv. Threatening, coercing, harassing, bullying, or intimidating fellow employees, including “joking” threats;
- v. Physical aggression while on duty or on County premises;
- vi. Inappropriate or offensive language;
- vii. Unprofessional behavior when dealing with the public or coworkers;
- viii. Dishonesty; and
- ix. Violation of state or federal laws or regulations.

93. Beckert has demonstrated conduct that meets each of these categories of conduct forbidden on County property.

94. The Beaufort County Personnel Handbook forbids using County property (i.e., computers, email addresses, etc.) to actively engage in procuring or transmitting material that is in violation of hostile workplace laws. Slander, libel, and deliberate misinformation is also forbidden through County property (i.e., computers, email addresses, postage, letterhead, etc.). The County monitors and inspects County property, including its computers and email addresses. The County assumed the duty to monitor Beckert’s computer and email account to ensure County property was not used to defame and threaten Walls and County employees. The County failed to properly monitor and/or inspect Beckert’s computer and email account as Beckert used County property (computers, letterhead, email account, and postage) to defame, threaten and intimidate Walls and County employees.

95. The County also assumed a duty to monitor its computers, computer assets and/or property in order to provide a safe work environment via the Beaufort County Computer and Information Systems Acceptable Use Policy.

96. Both Beckert and Walls, upon taking office and at the direction of the County, signed the Beaufort County Computer and Information Systems Acceptable Use Policy and were bound by the terms thereof and entitled to the protections set forth herein.

97. The Beaufort County Computer and Information Systems Acceptable Use Policy states it is unacceptable to use a Beaufort County computing asset to actively engage in procuring or transmitting material that is in violation of sexual harassment or hostile workplace laws, to slander, libel or deliberately distribute misinformation, or to threaten and/or harass. This policy also prohibits any emails “containing disruptive, abusive, harassing, threatening or offensive language....” The County monitors the use of its computers and computer assets, warranting they will not be used for any of the aforementioned acts.

98. Beckert used County computers, his County email address, County letterhead and the County’s website to engage in the prohibited acts detailed herein to damage the health, safety and reputation of Walls due to the County’s failure to use reasonable care to enforce policies designed to protect Walls and County employees.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION – OUTRAGE  
(AGAINST BECKERT)

99. Walls realleges and reincorporates all preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

100. The facts set forth above demonstrate Beckert inflicted severe distress on Walls through intimidation, threats and other related conduct.

101. Beckert’s conduct towards Plaintiff was so extreme and outrageous as to exceed all bounds of decency and must be regarded as atrocious and utterly intolerable in a civilized society.

102. The distress Walls has suffered and continues to suffer is so severe that no reasonable person could be expected to endure it.

103. Walls is entitled to recover damages against Beckert as a result of his outrageous acts.

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION – ASSAULT  
(AGAINST BECKERT)

104. Walls realleges and reincorporates all preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

105. Beckert’s conduct, as outlined above, was so egregious and outrageous that it caused Walls to be in reasonable fear of bodily harm.

106. As a direct and proximate result of Beckert’s assault, Walls has suffered damages for which Beckert is liable.

FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION – DEFAMATION  
(AGAINST BECKERT)

107. Walls realleges and reincorporates all preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

108. Throughout Walls’ tenure, Walls conducted her job duties in a professional and competent manner while Beckert acted with malice to destroy the character of Walls with his constant ridiculous and unfounded allegations.

109. Beckert intentionally made false accusations against Walls in public meetings knowing they are widely viewed, recorded, and able to be downloaded and watched at any time.

110. When these allegations were made, Beckert knew them to be false. These accusations were done to harass and intimidate Walls. All of Beckert’s allegations were found to be without merit.

111. Between 2014 and the present, Beckert made countless false accusations against Walls relating to the County’s tax process, breaking the law, etc.. These accusations were made

to the FBI, the Solicitor, the Sheriff, County employees, Walls, Walls' staff, County Administration, County Council, and media outlets.

112. These false allegations were published to the community at-large as Walls has been told that non-county employees are aware of the false allegations.

113. Beckert's false allegations regarding Walls improperly taxing citizens and/or breaking the law were released to numerous persons through use of County property.

114. As a direct and proximate result of the actions of Beckert in making these false allegations, Walls suffered injuries to her person, irreparable harm to her character, reputation and her political career.

115. Because Walls is a licensed CPA the false statements that Walls violated state laws, and cheated taxpayers, lacked integrity and competence in her work are all slanderous per se and as such recognized by South Carolina law as causing damage when published.

116. As a direct and proximate result of the actions of Beckert, Walls suffered permanent injuries.

FOR A SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION – INJUNCTION  
(AGAINST BECKERT)

117. Walls realleges and reincorporates all preceding paragraphs as if fully set forth herein.

118. As outlined herein, Beckert has engaged in harassment and/or stalking of Walls in Beaufort County, South Carolina.

119. For example, Beckert has accosted Walls, both in the Beaufort County Admin Building and off of County property. Beckert has stalked Walls on County property, including watching Walls work from outside of her window in an attempt to bully and/or intimidate her. Beckert has recorded and photographed Walls, both on and off County property. Beckert has



defamed Walls countless times, often via County property. Beckert has threatened Walls and her well-being.

120. Because of the severe and egregious nature of Beckert's conduct Walls has suffered injuries and is at risk for additional permanent injury that constitutes irreparable harm if Beckert's conduct continues.

121. To prevent further irreparable harm Walls is entitled to an injunction against continued conduct and contact.

WHEREFORE, Walls prays for an injunction against Beckert, enjoining his conduct, for Walls' protection and her staff in the Treasurer's Office, on such terms as this Court may deem to be just and proper.

WHEREFORE, Walls prays for judgment against Defendants for actual damages, together with punitive damages (Beckert only) in an appropriate amount, for the costs and disbursement of this action, and for such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

PETERS, MURDAUGH, PARKER, ELTZROTH  
& DETRICK, P.A.

BY:           /s/Chelci S. Avant          

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ATTORNEYS FOR PLAINTIFF

August 17, 2020  
Hampton, South Carolina



Beaufort County Auditor

ABOUT

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The Auditor is responsible for collecting information from outside agencies in order to create over 300,000 tax notices per year.

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Beaufort County Auditor

October 31, 2017 · 🌐

The county treasurer and interim administrator are not able to comply with their own timeline for tax notices. According to their lawless protocol the tax notices were due in the mail today, and they are now delayed for an undetermined amount of time. However, as this office has stated in the past two years. This protocol does not give taxpayers enough time to pay or/and adjust tax notices. I would like to personally apologize for the inconvenience this may be causing to you. See More

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Author

Beaufort County Auditor

Unfortunately as of today, no.

Like · Reply · 2y



Rich Bisi

So can we assume that the County Treasurer will allow taxpayers additional time to pay their taxes since the bills are going out late?

Like · Reply · 2y



Jim Bequette

HaHa

Like · Reply · 2y



Write a reply...



Rich Bisi

So, the county treasurer and interim administrator have not said yet WHEN the tax bills are going out?

Like · Reply · 2y



Jim Bequette

Our county council fails to manage the Administrator so he is never held responsible for failings. Term limits is needed.

Like · Reply · 2y

Write a comment...

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April Motor Vehicles are ready for collection. Hopefully you will receive the tax notice from the treasurer by the end of the week.

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Beaufort County Auditor

March 2, 2018 · 🌐

New information recently reported to the County Council and School Board about backroom collection deals done by Beaufort County Treasurer:

- You wrote that I have demanded that you violate what you believe is a legally binding agreement for Daufuskie Island Utility Corporation (DIUC). Actually state law demands you perform the duties of your job and collect taxes assessed and levied by the Auditor per 12-45-60. Your refusal to collect taxes is causing the School District to lose \$139,042.08 and the county \$56,246.47 in collections.
- You recently wrote taking partial payments by the Treasurer is prohibited by law 12-45-430 that law has been in effect since 2006. How is it you alone negotiated, prepared, determined, removed and reduced taxes for DIUC, in violation of GAAP, and approved a special partial payment plan for delinquent taxes that you have acknowledged is prohibited by law?
- What state law was used to create your special back room deal for a partial payment plan for delinquent taxes and used by you to remove taxes from the Auditor's tax duplicate? What does that say about taxpayer fairness and transparency of the law in the Treasurer's Office when corporations get special treatment to reduce and remove taxes and you are selling citizens homes at tax sale?
- What is interesting is 2016 taxes are paid yet taxes for 2013, 2014 and 2015 are unpaid. You are in violation of your own agreement and state law 12-45-410. When will that be addressed?

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Write a comment...



Herschel Evans  
Interesting

Like · Reply · 2y

Write a comment...



Beaufort County Auditor

February 15, 2018 · 🌐



ELECTRONICALLY FILED - 2020 Aug 17 2:33 PM - BEAUFORT - COMMON PLEAS - CASE#2020CP070163



**JIM BECKERT**  
**Auditor of Beaufort County**  
Multi-Government Center Post Office Box 458  
Beaufort, South Carolina 29901-0458  
Phone (843) 255-2500 Email: auditor@bcgov.net

Dear Recipient:

This letter is to inform you of a current situation with your **2020 watercraft/motor bill**. Enclosed you will find a tax bill provided by the Auditor's office with the required information and the due date of February 21, 2020.

The reason for this late tax bill is that the treasurer's office was not prepared to mail bills due to the lack of prior planning for the new law and its requirements. They have not communicated with this office or the software vendor on any needs or concerns they had until just before the Holiday closings.

The treasurer's office stated they needed more time to test (after 6 months) "We have not completed the testing of an XML file, eGov export, delinquent payments or refunds."

Currently, the County Administrator has inserted herself also, by giving control of the software contract to the treasurer, which in return has caused a corruption in the system and our ability to levy taxes. Levying taxes is an exclusive responsibility of the County Auditor according to the Code Of Laws Of South Carolina.

As advocates for the tax payer we are sending out these bills so that you can have updated payment information and registrations. We will be informing South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) in order to inform them of these unforeseen issues.

Payment for your Personal Property tax is due February 21, 2020.

Thank you,

Jim Beckert  
*Jim Beckert*  
Beaufort County Auditor



[/AuditorBeaufortCounty](#)



[@BeaufortAuditor](#)

**Serving as the citizens' advocate for transparency in the taxation process one tax bill at a time.**

May 31, 2017

Mr. Dave Thomas  
Purchasing Director, Beaufort County  
Post Office Drawer 1228  
Beaufort, South Carolina 29901-1228

Re: Contract Number IFB 081214

Mr. Thomas,  
Concerning the renewal for the above stated contract number SouthData would request to continue the contract for those items that are controlled by the Treasurer's Office and terminate contract those items controlled by the Auditor's Office.

Mr. Beckert has made the relationship with Beaufort County extremely difficult and we cannot continue to work outside our normal operating procedures to meet his requests. We have spent many man-hours and valuable resources working for the Auditor's office only to result in emails questioning our competence and performance.

SouthData staff has been told not to communicate with Mr. Beckert. All communication with the Auditor and his office must go through myself. This was necessary to reduce the number of changes made to procedures and products without the authorization of Mr. Kubic.

We produce billing and assessment documents for approximately 140 counties in the Southeast and have never experienced the level of frustration nor have we ever requested that any portion of a contract be terminated.

I do apologize for any inconvenience this may cause the County but I must keep the best interest of our people, processes and products in the forefront of my decisions.

Please let me know if you need anything further from SouthData.

Sincerely,

Lora H. Southard  
Vice President of Sales, SouthData  
336-783-56944

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