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The environmentalist for the Todd County Health Department was fired last Friday after receiving a letter from the director that outlined several problems that stemmed from job performance, “abusive behavior,” speaking to the media and “theft.”

Todd County Health Department Director Leslie Daniels, in a letter obtained by the Standard through the Kentucky Open Records Act, gave several reasons for firing Environmentalist Malcolm Rust. Some of those reasons listed dated back to 2005.

“It is required ... that restaurants be inspected twice a year,” Daniels said in a summary in the letter. “You have failed to do so from 2005-present. I have given you warnings concerning speaking with media. I also found your food establishment files to be out of order.”

Daniels also went on to say that Rust had been giving incorrect scores during restaurant inspections.

Daniels also listed 15 dates and alleged violations, from time cards coded incorrectly to “derogatory comments” about the Amish in reference to schools.

Daniels also accused Rust of stealing a SIM card out of a health department cell phone. The Elkton City Police did confirm Tuesday they talked to Daniels, but no report was filed and the matter was referred to the county attorney’s office.

Rust came under fire recently after an article ran in the (Hopkinsville) Kentucky New Era about the lack of proper paperwork for health inspections in Todd County. Rust had also been questioned at a recent health board meeting about paperwork concerning on-site inspections of septic systems at subdivisions in Todd County.

Rust, who was put on part-time status for more than a year, had claimed in both the Standard and the New Era that he didn’t have time to perform his duties after his hours were limited.

Rust declined to speak to the Standard concerning the firing and referred questions to his attorney, Ben Fletcher of Hopkinsville.

Fletcher said that Daniels and the Todd County Health Board kept Rust on limited hours and he was “set up to fail.”

“He is going to appeal this,” Fletcher said. “I am going to aggressively defend Malcolm against the frankly outrageous and disciplinary action taken by the director.”

Fletcher said the “situation” developed a couple years ago when Daniels had “displeasure” over how Rust was handling the inspections of restroom facilities at Amish/Mennonite schools.

“Malcolm was following what a Todd County Circuit Judge ... ordered him to do,” he said. “Daniels wanted Malcolm to ignore some of the court orders, and he didn’t and that is when the problems started.”

Fletcher said that some of the accusations that Daniels made in the termination of employment letter to Rust are “outrageous at best” and “libelous at worst.”

“I’m going to look at every available legal forum — including circuit court, federal court, federal and or administrative agencies — and I’m going to possibly file a whistle blower lawsuit.”

Fletcher said Rust received a letter of an intent to terminate and then there was a hearing in front of Daniels.

“Then she sends out a termination letter with new complaints,” Fletcher said. “She should have really given some thought to accusing (Rust) of theft. I think it shows that she is incompetent and can’t make these kind of decisions.”

Fletcher said he thinks it goes to Daniels’ state of mind when it comes to being a manager.

“Ms. Daniels, herself, will become a key part of this,” he said. “I look forward to putting her under oath and questioning her in front of a hearing officer. She has overstepped the boundaries of common decency in this case.”