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City councilors react to UMass investigation into Holyoke's mayor

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HOLYOKE, MA (WGGB/WSHM) -- Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse is under fire for an alleged relationship with students while he was a part-time teacher at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The city councilors we spoke with said the alleged relationship between the mayor and a student at UMass Amherst makes the city look bad.

An allegation against Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse is sending shockwaves through western Massachusetts during a critical time where he is running for Congress against Democratic Rep. Richard Neal.

“Complete frustration. There’s just really so many unanswered questions on this matter. I think that the light that he has put the mayor’s office in the city of Holyoke, the city of Holyoke in general and my alma mater, the University of Massachusetts...this whole situation has put each of those entities in a bleak light,” said city councilor David Bartley.

According to documents, the College Democrats of Massachusetts told UMass that they would not be inviting Morse to any future events, saying the mayor made students uncomfortable and abused his power for sexual relationships.



College Dems of MA
@CollegeDemsofMA



A statement from the College Democrats of Massachusetts regarding our letter to Alex Morse:



The university says Morse worked as an adjunct instructor from fall 2014 to the fall of 2019.

UMass said they are looking into the matter since relationships between students and faculty is prohibited.

Morse sent out a statement Sunday night that said in part:

“ *I have never violated UMass policy. Any claim to the contrary is false. As I've acknowledged, I have had consensual relationships with other men, including students enrolled at local universities I've met using dating apps.* **”**

Many city councilors Western Mass News spoke with are frustrated.

In a statement, city councilor James Leahy said:

“ *Like many, I was disappointed to hear about the mayor's actions and his admittedly using poor judgment. I will reach out to my colleagues on the board to determine if any actions are needed.* **”**


City councilor Mike Sullivan is calling for the mayor to resign, but Bartley told Western Mass News over the phone that a resignation is up to the mayor himself.

“We don't have a recall provision in our charter. There is no real mechanism other than the mayor's whoever he sees in the mirror every day and he looks at that guy and makes a decision whether or not he wants to resign,” Bartley noted.


Western Mass News reached out to the mayor for an interview on Monday, but he declined.

You can read more of Morse's full statement below:



Alex Morse 
@AlexBMorse 

My statement on the last 48 hours.

9:31 PM · Aug 9, 2020 

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