

Fired Female Exec Hits Back At Firm's Trade Secrets Claims

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By **Braden Campbell**

Law360 (September 30, 2019, 8:30 PM EDT) -- The fired asset management executive who last week accused Bramshill Investments of canning her for calling out its “boys’ club” culture filed a renewed suit in New Jersey federal court Monday after the firm sued her for allegedly co-opting its client lists.

Ex-Bramshill Executive Director Ashley Pullen hit back at the firm’s Sept. 24 suit accusing her of stealing its trade secrets, calling it an “intimidation tactic” meant to cover up the allegations in **her initial suit**, which preceded Bramshill’s retort by hours.

“It is exactly this type of retaliatory action that serves as a veiled means of silencing women and victims of gender discrimination who display the courage to complain about the unlawful discrimination they are subjected to,” Pullen said in her complaint. Pullen on Monday also asked to withdraw the earlier suit, which she filed in New York federal court.

Pullen’s new complaint largely tracks the last one, once again painting Bramshill as a hotbed of sexism where male leaders sideline the firm’s few women staffers and treat them as eye candy.

In addition to accusing the firm of underpaying her and alleging its chief executive used her looks to solicit clients, Pullen claims the firm fired her for calling out sexism less than three months after she started. Specifically, she claims the firm called her “aggressive” after she pointed out ethics lapses and fired her after she said it wouldn’t have used such a term if she were a man.

Bramshill claims it fired Pullen for sharing confidential documents with Sparhawk Advisory LLC, a firm she launched. The asset manager detailed these accusations in its New Jersey federal suit, claiming she operated her firm at Bramshill despite pledging not to, and even sent her Sparhawk email account certain trade secrets including Bramshill’s “most-coveted client list.” The firm claims Pullen has refused its demands that she delete the documents and turn over her laptop, asking the court for an injunction making her return its property.

Pullen claimed Monday that Bramshill sued her not to recover its client lists and laptop, but to send a message that women who speak up “get punished, silenced and sued.” Had Bramshill really meant to protect its trade secrets, it would not have waited until after she sued to go on the attack, Pullen said. She also reiterated claims that men at the firm sent more than 30 emails to her personal account, some of which had a “higher level of confidentiality” than those she was purportedly fired for sending.

Pullen's attorneys, Michael Willemin and Douglas Wigdor of Wigdor LLP, said Monday the firm filed a "frivolous" suit against her "because she had the courage to stand up against gender discrimination."

"This conduct is reprehensible and contrary to lessons learned from the #MeToo movement," they said in a joint statement.

When reached for comment Monday, a Bramshill spokesperson pointed to the firm's prior statement calling her claims "completely false."

Pullen is represented by Douglas Wigdor, Michael Willemin, Bryan Arbeit and Julia Elmaleh-Sachs of Wigdor LLP.

Bramshill has not responded to the new suit, but is represented in its trade secrets suit by Matthew Gallo and Elizabeth Lorell of Gordon & Rees LLP.

The case is Ashley Pullen v. Bramshill Investments LLC, case number 2:19-cv-18531, in the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey.