The administration pattern of hunkering down, remaining silent and wait out the storm is a familiar one.

It did so when a senior campaign official was accused of the sexual assault of a co-worker, hired for a high-ranking position and retained for nearly a year before his forced resignation.

The pattern was repeated with the disclosure that the executive director of the Schools Development Authority had discharged career employees and replaced them with friends or relatives, many of whom had no relevant experience. She was forced to resign despite claims her actions were cleared by the governorîs office.

It is unlikely that the administration will veer from its pattern of conduct or that Hicks will step down.

Murphy is boxed in at this point. The window of opportunity has closed for him to bring Hicks into his office and have an admittedly painful conversation about resignation or administrative leave.

While the pressure builds in the Legislature and keeps the controversy alive, any move now by Murphy will invite criticism that he waited far too long to act and did so only when it appeared further delay would be politically damaging.

There is no dispute that the governor has been preoccupied with the personal tragedies and economic havoc wreaked by the COVID-19 pandemic. It does not excuse him, though, from dealing more vigorously with the scandal at the Edna Mahan facility. Walking and chewing gum is a condition of employment for a governor.

While the timing of the outcome of the investigation into the assault and abuse allegations is unclear, Murphy may have been better served if he had broken from the pattern of delay and silence.

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