



**State of Washington  
PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION**

711 Capitol Way Rm. 206, PO Box 40908 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0908  
(360) 753-1111 • FAX (360) 753-1112

**Toll Free 1-877-601-2828 • E-mail: [pdc@pdc.wa.gov](mailto:pdc@pdc.wa.gov) • Website: [www.pdc.wa.gov](http://www.pdc.wa.gov)**

November 4, 2021

Delivered electronically to Michael J. Nelson at "michael.nelson@edmondswa.gov"

Subject: Complaint filed by Cynthia M. Sjoblom, PDC Case 97619

Dear Mayor Nelson:

Below is a copy of an electronic letter sent to Cynthia Sjoblom concerning a complaint filed with the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC).

As noted in the letter to Ms. Sjoblom, the PDC has dismissed this matter in accordance with RCW 42.17A.755(1) and will not conduct a more formal investigation into these allegations or take further enforcement action in this matter.

PDC staff is reminding you about the importance of refraining from discussing candidate campaigns at any time in your official capacity during a public meeting, with or without identifying the candidate by name as this may indirectly support or oppose the candidate. PDC staff expects in the future that you will follow PDC laws and rules regarding the use of public facilities.

If you have questions, you may contact Jennifer Hansen at 1-360-586-4560 toll-free at 1-877-601-2828, or by e-mail at [pdc@pdc.wa.gov](mailto:pdc@pdc.wa.gov).

Sincerely,

*Electronically signed*

Jennifer Hansen  
Compliance Officer

Endorsed by,

*Electronically signed*

Kim Bradford  
Deputy Director  
For Peter Frey Lavallee  
Executive Director



**State of Washington  
PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION**

711 Capitol Way Rm. 206, PO Box 40908 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0908  
(360) 753-1111 • FAX (360) 753-1112

**Toll Free 1-877-601-2828 • E-mail: [pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov](mailto:pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov) • Website: [www.pdca.wa.gov](http://www.pdca.wa.gov)**

November 4, 2021

Delivered electronically to Cynthia M. Sjoblom at “cindysjoblom@msn.com”

Subject: Complaint regarding Michael J. Nelson, PDC Case 97619

Dear Cynthia Sjoblom:

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) has completed its review of the complaint you filed on August 16, 2021. The complaint alleged that Michael J. Nelson, Mayor of the City of Edmonds, may have violated RCW 42.17A.555 by using public office or agency facilities to oppose a candidate, thereby assisting the election campaign of that candidate's opponent(s).

PDC staff reviewed the allegations; the applicable statutes, and rules and the response provided by the Respondent, to determine whether the record supports a finding of one or more violations.

Based on staff's review, we found the following:

- Michael J. Nelson is the current Mayor of the City of Edmonds after being elected to the position in 2019 and has previously served on the Edmonds City Council.
- RCW 42.17A.555 states in part that no elected official may use any of the facilities of a public office, directly or indirectly, for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of any person to any office.
- As part of his official duties, Mayor Nelson facilitates the City Council meetings which includes bringing each meeting to order, noting agenda items, calling on council members for motions, votes, briefings and comments, as well as making his own briefings and comments.
- The complaint alleged that during the August 3, 2021, regular City Council meeting, Mayor Nelson shared a prepared statement regarding his concerns about the in-person attendance of, and public comments made by, members of the public at the July 27, 2021, regular City Council meeting and that his comments supported or opposed candidates running for a seat on the City Council in the 2021 election.
- In his response, Mayor Nelson stated that the complaint was unfounded because he did not identify any specific candidate or campaign and that he was expressing his disapproval of the statements made by members of the public directed at elected officials and city staff.
- During the investigation, PDC staff reviewed the video recording and written minutes from both the July 27 and August 3, 2021, City Council meetings and found that during the July 27 meeting, at least one person who was a candidate for Edmonds City Council made public comment regarding a proposed online portal to report hate crimes and, during the August 3 meeting, Mayor Nelson provided comments regarding both the public's in-person behavior and statements at the July meeting that he believed were directed at city officials and staff.

- Mayor Nelson’s comments began with him stating that “he wanted to comment on what happened at last week’s City Council meeting, but he wanted to wait until after the polls closed because there is some relevancy.” Mayor Nelson continued regarding the events of the July 27 meeting saying it “was part of an organized effort by a partisan campaign to bully and harass specific elected officials and City staff by a local City Council candidate’s campaign.”

It appears that the comments made by Mayor Nelson during the August 3, 2021, Edmonds City Council meeting were intended to convey his disapproval of the statements made by members of the public and their general behavior before and during the July 27, 2021, meeting and that Mayor Nelson believed that he was not discussing elections or candidates.

Based on our findings staff has determined that in this instance, using the mayor’s comment period of a public meeting to indirectly support and oppose candidates for Edmonds City Council, although prohibited, does not amount to a finding of a violation that warrants further investigation.

PDC staff is reminding Mayor Michael Nelson about the importance of refraining from discussing candidate campaigns at any time during a public meeting, with or without the mention of the candidate by name, in order to avoid the appearance of supporting or opposing a candidate, and expects he will ensure future compliance with PDC statutes and rules.

Based on this information, the PDC finds that no further action is warranted and has dismissed this matter in accordance with RCW 42.17A.755(1).

If you have questions, you may contact Jennifer Hansen at 1-360-586-4560 toll-free at 1-877-601-2828, or by e-mail at [pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov](mailto:pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov).

Sincerely,

Electronically signed

Jennifer Hansen  
Compliance Officer

Endorsed by,

Electronically signed

Kim Bradford  
Deputy Director  
For Peter Frey Lavalley  
Executive Director

cc: Michael J. Nelson