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| Respondent Name |
| William Armacost |
| Complainant Name |
| Marsha Maguire |
| Complaint Description |
| <p><u>Marsha Maguire</u> <i>(Fri, 31 Dec 2021 at 2:41 PM)</i></p> <p>The attached text message (provided by Mayor William Armacost as the result of a public records request) shows that Mayor Armacost acted in his role as mayor to send a false and derogatory political campaign message to a constituent on cellphone equipment used in his official duties. In the text message (attached), he promoted the election of several then-current city council members in the 2021 Sequim City Council race (held in Nov. 2020). "If we don't hold onto our seats," he wrote, "[we] will end up with radical liberals that will give the Tribe the keys to the City!" He wrote the text message between Oct. 1 and Oct. 29, 2020, during the peak of the campaign season.</p> <p>RCW 42.52.180 prevents any state officer or employee from making use of equipment used by the agency (in this case, Sequim City Council), directly or indirectly, to assist the campaign "for election of a person to an office" https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=42.52.180. The city's website directs users to communicate with their elected city representatives via public comment during council meetings, or by emailing or calling council members https://www.sequimwa.gov/67/City-Council. The number given on the city's website to call or text Mayor Armacost is (360) 582-2462 https://www.sequimwa.gov/directory.aspx?EID=73. The voice message one hears when calling that number is Mayor Armacost promoting vitamins that he sells.</p> <p>In his text-message reply to a person identified as "recipient Julie" (see attached public record), the mayor refers to himself as a member of "the current council." He then qualifies "the current council" by adding "(the four of us)" – there are seven members of the Sequim City Council – and saying those four are working on "ordinance's [sic] on homeless people from camping in our parks, panhandling, etc." (I should note that this, in itself, may violate the Open Public Meetings Act, given that there has been no discussion of any such ordinances during public city council meetings, according to meeting minutes dated Jan. 11, 2021, through the period of Oct. 2021 covered by the public records request; nor were these topics discussed during the council's special "advance" meeting on July 20, 2021, to determine council priorities. If such ordinances, or planning for such ordinances, were discussed by council members, but not during a public meeting, I believe that would be a violation of the Open Public Meetings Act, RCW 42.30.)</p> <p>According to RCW 42.17A.335(1)(a), a person may not "sponsor" a statement "that contains a false statement of material fact about a candidate for public office." In response to a question from a constituent, the mayor claimed that the council members supporting his positions on homeless people as stated in his text message, and who were running for election in the 2021 city council election, must "hold onto" their seats. If not, the opposing candidates who were not then serving on the council – namely, Lowell Rathbun, Vicki Lowe, and Kathy Downer – would "give the Tribe the keys to the City!" He also described the opposing candidates as "radical liberals."</p> <p>There is no evidence that any of the candidates the mayor refers to, neither Mr. Rathbun nor Ms. Lowe nor Ms. Downer, is a "radical liberal," and Mayor Armacost provides none. However, during the election campaign, backers of the mayor and the council candidates running against Rathbun, Lowe, and Downer described them as Marxists and communists, again providing no evidence (https://www.knkx.org/politics/2021-10-28/as-sequim-votes-conspiracy-theories-and-far-right-politics-swirl-in-the-background). This was unverified, inaccurate fear mongering, and the mayor echoed it in his text message to a constituent.</p> |

There is no evidence, either, that any of those candidates (Rathbun, Lowe, or Downer) had any inappropriate arrangements with "the Tribe" (presumably the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe) that might result, if they were elected, in questionable or illegal actions by the Sequim City Council with regard to the Tribe. Mayor Armacost's statement was an insult both to the candidates running for city council (by communicating to a constituent that those candidates were basically puppets of "the Tribe") and to the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe (by implying that the Tribe sought to install "radicals" on the city council who would do their bidding unquestioningly). There is no evidence that the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe has done anything but good for the entire Sequim area, although the mayor and the candidates he supported strenuously opposed the development of the Tribe's legally and scientifically sound Healing MAT Clinic.

Making such a statement, especially to a constituent, and using for that purpose equipment identified by the City of Sequim as a means for the mayor to conduct city business, may be in violation of the RCW's listed above, and I ask that the PDC investigate the mayor's words and actions.

[Note that in Oct. 2021, Mayor William Armacost received a formal written warning from the PDC re. his attempt to reserve the City of Sequim council chambers for a "candidate forum" sponsored by the Independent Advisory Assoc., which endorsed specific candidates for Sequim City Council (PDC Case 97026). Although the complaint was ultimately dismissed, the mayor was found to have violated RCW 42.17.555: "Pursuant to WAC 390-37-060(1)(d), Mayor Armacost will receive a formal written warning concerning his failure to adhere to the statutory requirements/prohibitions delineated in RCW 42.17A.555. Mayor Armacost will be informed the Commission will consider the formal warning letter in deciding on further Commission action if there are future violations of PDC laws or rules related to the use of facilities – RCW 42.17A.555.]"

Thank you.

Marsha Maguire

What impact does the alleged violation(s) have on the public?

The public has the right to expect that its elected public officials conduct official business honestly and in compliance with state law. If the mayor of Sequim, WA, inappropriately (and illegally) used equipment designated by the City of Sequim for conducting city business, and if he conveyed false, insulting, and potentially damaging information about several city council candidates to a constituent during the course of an election campaign, then the people of Sequim are being represented by someone who does not comply with the law and who uses his position to misinform and mislead the public. That is the type of behavior the Public Disclosure Commission was empowered to prevent.

List of attached evidence or contact information where evidence may be found

A PDF file containing a text message provided by Sequim Mayor William Armacost as the result of a public records request; the file is named
Armacost20211119 DECLARATION OF PUBLIC RECORDS SEARCH C000176-102921-5.pdf

List of potential witnesses

City of Sequim Mayor William Armacost,
<https://www.sequimwa.gov/directory.aspx?EID=73>

Certification (Complainant)

I certify (or declare) under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that information provided with this complaint is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

**DECLARATION OF PUBLIC RECORDS SEARCH
C000176-102921**

I, William Armacost, Mayor for the City of Sequim, do hereby certify that I completed the following search of my personal devices and personal accounts on 11/18, 2021:

- I searched personal physical documents and the following accounts and devices:
 - Text messages on personal cell phone(s)
- The search was performed in order to produce records responsive to the following Public Records Request C000176-102921:

Email sent to recipient "Julie" by Mayor Armacost that includes this message:

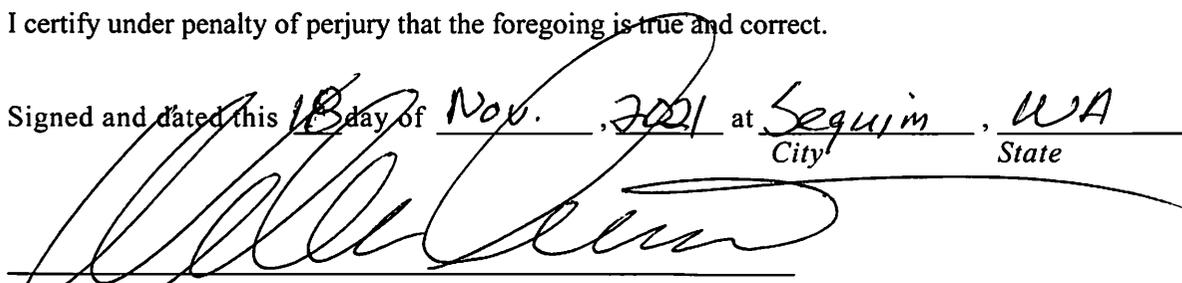
"Hi Julie , yes I can give you hope ! We , the current council , (all four of us) are working hard to send our messages too Olympia ! Plus we are working on ordinance's on homeless people from camping in our parks , panhandling etc . We stood up to City Staff and said NO to increasing water and sewer rates , plus we passed a low income discount for utilities.
If we don't hold onto our seats , will end up with radical liberals that will give the Tribe the keys to the City !
We The People must stand up together, to every elected official and have our voice heard !
Blessings,
William"

- I searched for records within the following dates: October 1, 2021 – October 29, 2021

I acknowledge that this record was sent in the form of a text message from my personal cell phone, and that I erased this message prior to October 29, 2021. Erasure of this message was in keeping with my normal process of deleting my text messages twice a week.

I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Signed and dated this 18 day of Nov., 2021 at Sequim, WA.
City State



Signature