

October 28, 2024

PDC

[pdc@pdc.wa.gov](mailto:pdc@pdc.wa.gov)

Attention: Tabitha Townsend, Compliance Officer

RE: Response to Citizens for Marysville Schools, Alleged Violation

PDC Case Number: 160558

Dear Ms. Townsend,

This letter is in response to the email notification sent to [ideano9029@aol.com](mailto:ideano9029@aol.com) on October 22, 2024, stating that the PDC received a complaint from Conner Edwards referencing RCW 42.17A.235 and .240 for failure to timely and accurately report contributions and expenditures.

### **Clarifying Misinformation**

Firstly, we want to take this opportunity to clarify some of the information provided in Mr. Edwards' complaint:

- The Citizens for Marysville Schools (CMS) was a pro-levy and bond citizens group formed to inform community members about the importance of supporting the school district measures for levies to help the school district fund areas that are not paid for by the state and bonds to upgrade or replace aging facilities. Mr. Edwards states, "I am requesting that this complaint be given the highest priority considering the current scrutiny surrounding the Marysville School District's financial mismanagement and the related double failure of the District's 2022 levy ballot measure. This complaint relates to these issues." It is important to note that the CMS funds and the school district funds do not intermingle. There is no correlation between one and the other.
- Mr. Edwards states in his complaint that several of the CMS board members were also Marysville School District employees. While that is true, each of the employees served on the committee personally and for the community, not as an employee. The following are no longer district employees: Tracy Souza, Peggy King, and Scott Beebe. Dean Ledford is a Tulalip community member who served as the treasurer. Jodi Runyon is still the Director of Communications with the District but has not had an active role in the CMS since the 2019 - 2020 school year.

- Mr. Edwards states that the CMS did not file a registration indicating they were participating in the 2022 election cycle. This is because CMS was not participating in that cycle.
- It is true that the Marysville School District submitted back-to-back levy measures in the spring of 2022, both of which failed. The CMS was not involved in promoting either of these measures, as the committee had disbanded by that time due to the departure of staff and Mr. Ledford's personal and health-related issues.
- After the double levy failure, a separate group of community members, unrelated to CMS, formed "Best Schools Marysville" to help support the district in its levy and bond efforts.
- Prior to CMS disbanding, the group held a meeting and voted to donate the funds left in CMS's holdings to Best Schools Marysville, and Mr. Ledford closed the bank account. Best Schools Marysville has an accounting of these funds.
- As Mr. Edwards states, "I suspect that there were significant levels of fundraising and expenditures related to the 2022 election cycle campaign." CMS did not significantly raise funds for the 2022 and subsequent levy measure run by the district as CMS did not participate in this election cycle as stated earlier.
- Staff at the Marysville School District had the option of selecting a payroll deduction to donate funds to CMS. Funds that came in would have been through those direct donations. CMS did not solicit other funding during this time. These contributions were stopped after CMS's disbanding.
- The \$600 donation from SEIU 925 was donated to Best Schools Marysville, not CMS, as Mr. Edwards states. Best Schools Marysville has an accounting of that donation.

### **Failure to Submit Reports**

Mr. Edwards' complaint also addresses the late or non-filing of necessary reports. In 2020, serving as the CMS treasurer, my wife passed away due to an extended illness, and I suffered significant health issues prior to her passing. In addition, my elder brother passed away in 2022, and my younger brother passed away in 2023. These were very difficult times. I thought that I had filed all the necessary paperwork. When CMS disbanded, the committee was under the understanding that all appropriate steps had been taken, including the filing of any necessary reports.

### **Conclusion**

Again, Mr. Edwards states, "Best Schools Marysville is effectively Citizens for Marysville Schools in all but name and appearance." This is not true. Best Schools Marysville has a completely different board

and operating principles. You can learn more about Best Schools Marysville here:

<https://www.bestschoolsmarysville.org/>

The failure to file the necessary reports was due to circumstances regarding the committee's disbanding and the treasurer's health and personal life matters. CMS never had any malicious intent or mishandled funds. Unfortunately, this citizen complaint is felt to be an effort to continue the vitriolic diatribe that has plagued the Marysville School District since the failure of two levies in 2022 and the loss of nearly \$27M in funding for schools. The Best Schools Marysville committee has stepped up and stepped in when CMS was no longer able to function and provide support as a citizens group.

I obtained bank records for the CMS from 2020 - 2023 and am reviewing them now.

Finally, there are two items of concern: In the email exchanges received, my email field says "To: My Chart Skagit" with my email, and there is a notation embedded in the email from Mr. Peebles that states the following: "Do not edit the description here. Please edit the description in the case track system" which states that I wrote that on October 15, 2024, at 9:38 a.m." I did not make this entry.

Please advise us on the next steps, and please use the following email address for future correspondence: [ledforddean19@gmail.com](mailto:ledforddean19@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Dean Ledford

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Former Treasurer, CMS

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