



**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.pdcc.wa.gov](http://www.pdcc.wa.gov)**

March 5, 2025

Delivered electronically to ben@saxtonriley.com

Subject: Complaints filed by Kenton Gartrell, PDC Case 161747

Benjamin J. Riler, City Attorney:

Below is a copy of an electronic letter sent to Kenton Gartrell concerning a complaint filed with the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC). As noted in the letter, 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.

RCW 42.17A.555 prohibits the use of public agency facilities to promote, directly or indirectly, a campaign for election of any person to any office. RCW 42.17A.555 does list exemptions, including activities which are part of the normal and regular conduct of the agency. In accordance with WAC 390-37-060(1)(d), PDC staff is issuing you a formal written warning concerning the requirements that prohibit the use of public agency resources, including using city resources and staff time, to promote, directly or indirectly, a campaign for election of any person to any office. In the future, PDC staff expect you to closely scrutinize information posted to city social media sites, and use of city resources, such as staff time and equipment.

The Commission will consider this formal written warning in deciding on further Commission action if there are future violations of PDC laws or 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, contact Alice Fiman at 1-877-601-2828 or by e-mail at [pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov](mailto:pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov).

*Electronically signed by  
Alice Fiman*

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Alice Fiman  
Compliance Officer

*Electronically signed by Kim  
Bradford*

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Kim Bradford  
Deputy Director  
For Peter Frey Lavalley  
Executive Director



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March 5, 2025

Delivered electronically to patriotvikingwoodworking@gmail.com

Subject: Complaint regarding City of Sunnyside officials, PDC Case 161747

Kenton Gartrell:

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) completed its review of the complaint you filed November 2, 2024. The complaint alleged City of Sunnyside officials violated RCW 42.17A.555 by misusing public facilities or resources to promote, directly or indirectly, a campaign for the election of any person to any office. The specific allegation includes the city's Feb. 16, 2024, Facebook post of an invitation to city staff and the city council to attend the grand opening of the Chelsea Dimas for State Representative campaign office grand opening.

PDC staff reviewed the allegations and evidence submitted; the applicable statutes and rules, and the response provided by Benjamin J. Riley, City Attorney, to determine whether the record supports a finding of one or more violations.

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

- [RCW 42.17A.555](#) prohibits the use of public agency facilities to promote or oppose, directly or indirectly, a campaign for election of any person to any office, unless the agency can demonstrate the activity is part of the agency's normal and regular conduct. The method, format and frequency of communication should be typical of how the agency routinely communicates with its audiences.
- The PDC has developed [Guidelines for Local Government Agencies in Election Campaigns](#) and a [2015 staff analysis](#) to assist public agencies in determining whether an activity is permitted under RCW 42.17A.555.
- The Guidelines state that public resources – including staff work hours and agency equipment and supplies – should only be used to produce factual, objective, and fair information and that public resources should not be used to collect, produce, or distribute promotional content related to a campaign or election.
- PDC staff noted the city regularly posts information on local business ribbon cuttings and events on its website.
- However, advertising the activities of a candidate for public office should not be equated to advertising a local business.

- In response to the complaint, Benjamin J. Riley, City Attorney, stated the city posted the event on its Facebook page without regard to its political activity, and noted the city did not encourage attendance in its posting.

In accordance with WAC 390-37-060(1)(d), PDC staff issued a formal written warning to the City of Sunnyside concerning the prohibition on the use of public agency facilities to promote, directly or indirectly, a campaign for election of any person to any office.

In the future, the City of Sunnyside should closely scrutinize the use of public resources, including advertising on its social media sites and resources used for private events. The Commission will consider this formal written warning in deciding further Commission action if there are future violations of PDC laws 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, contact Alice Fiman toll-free at 1-877-601-2828 or by e-mail at [pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov](mailto:pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov).

*Electronically signed by*

*Alice Fiman*

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Alice Fiman

Compliance Officer

*Electronically signed by*

*Kim Bradford*

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Kim Bradford

Deputy Director

For Peter Frey Lavalley

Executive Director