

CITY OF SPOKANE ETHICS COMMISSION

Neil Muller,

Complainant,

vs.

DECLARATION OF
LORI KINNEAR

Karen Stratton,

Respondent

Lori Kinnear deposes, declares and states:

1. I am over the age of eighteen and competent to testify in the above matter, and I make the following statements based on personal knowledge.

2. I am a member of the Spokane City Council. I have been an elected member of the Council since 2016. Prior to my election to the Council I served as a legislative aide to Council Member Amber Waldref. As a legislative aid, and later as a member of the Spokane City Council, I have had many discussions with Council Member Karen Stratton ("CM Stratton") on a variety of city issues and matters.

3. I first became aware of the licensed cannabis retailer "Lucky Leaf" in 2016. At that time Council Member Beggs ("CM Beggs") and I were approached by Father Connell, who resides at Our Lady of Lourdes cathedral downtown within several blocks of Lucky Leaf. He was very upset about Lucky Leaf locating so close to the Cathedral and related to us the increase in needles and cannabis paraphernalia in and around the grounds of the Cathedral. He also related that his living quarters were broken into and items were taken. He blamed this criminal activity and littering on the customers who frequented Lucky Leaf.

4. Later that year CM Beggs and I were asked to be part of a panel to discuss how to prevent cannabis retailers from locating near churches. The panel also included a

1 Washington State legislator. We were questioned by church participants and Father Connell
2 about what the City could do to mitigate the perceived negative impacts of retail cannabis
3 shops. The attendees were angry and demanded that the City "do something" to remove
4 Lucky Leaf, citing all the negative behavior they were seeing around that part of downtown.
5 The state legislator also put the onus on the City of Spokane, specifically the City Council, to
6 take action regarding the siting of retail stores. CM Beggs and I pushed back on this request,
7 reiterating that the licensing requirements for cannabis retailers is something the State of
8 Washington should be regulating, not the City of Spokane. The panel discussion ended
9 without resolution.

10 5. Several weeks after the panel discussion I visited Lucky Leaf with SPD Officer
11 Ottmar. We spoke to the manager and mentioned the negative behavior in and around the
12 area, asking him if he could better manage those customers in and around the store. The
13 manager agreed to make an effort to resolve the behavior of his customers. I am advised that
14 after our visit and subsequent visits by Officer Ottmar or other SPD officers, the issues around
15 Lucky Leaf quieted down.

16 6. Despite the decreased negative behavior around the store, a protest by a former
17 state legislator was started and petitions were circulated to change zoning laws and other
18 regulations to remove Lucky Leaf (after the fact) and prevent further cannabis retailers from
19 locating in and around churches. The petition was not successful.

20 7. The issues around Lucky Leaf became less of a problem as time passed. I have
21 not heard from Father Connell or anyone at the Cathedral since, and to my knowledge other
22 council members likewise have not received complaints about Lucky Leaf.

23 8. My interaction with Lucky Leaf in 2016 was part of a broader effort by members
24 of the City Council at that time to engage citizens regarding issues associated with licensed
25 cannabis businesses. My recollection is that before and after our panel discussion in 2016, CM
26 Stratton had been communicating with concerned citizens and the operators of Lucky Leaf
27 regarding perceived criminal activity near the store, and that she had been to the Lucky Leaf
28 store to address those concerns.

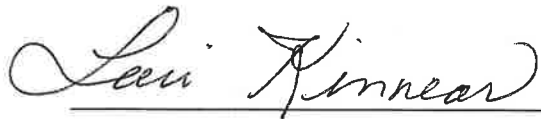
29 9. During my time on the City Council, CM Stratton has been careful to recuse
30

1 herself from legislative votes that she believed might appear to benefit her or her farm directly
2 or indirectly. For this reason, I believe that if CM Stratton or her farm had a business
3 relationship with Lucky Leaf, she would have advised me of the fact, and I would recall it. I
4 do not remember CM Stratton ever indicating her farm had done business with Lucky Leaf.

5 10. I am aware of the June 20, 2018 letter written by CM Stratton to the City of Pasco.
6 It is not my place to express an opinion as to whether the letter constitutes a violation of the
7 Spokane Code of Ethics, but I can say the fact of the letter and the tone therein is entirely
8 consistent with CM Stratton's approach to her position on the council. CM Stratton is well-
9 known on the council (and in Spokane in general) for her hands-on and energetic efforts on
10 behalf of constituents and Spokane citizens. The letter is also consistent with her stated
11 support of the cannabis industry in Washington.

12 The foregoing statements are made under penalty of perjury under the laws of the
13 State of Washington at Spokane, Washington.

14 Dated this 3rd day of December, 2019.

15
16 
17

18 Lori Kinnear
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30