

# CITY OF SPOKANE ETHICS COMMISSION

## ETHICS COMPLAINT FORM

A complaint must be in writing, submitted on this form, and it must describe the allegations with sufficient detail to enable both the Commission and the person who is the subject of the complaint to reasonably understand the nature of the complaint. The complaint must also be signed, dated, and filed with the City Clerk's Office, and it must include a statement indicating that, to the best of the person's knowledge, information, and belief formed after reasonable reflection, the information in the complaint is true.

When you have completed this form, submit it to:

Office of the City Clerk  
808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.  
Spokane, WA 99201-3342  
clerks@spokanecity.org  
509.625.6350

RECEIVED

JUN 24 2025

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

**\*\*Please be advised that the completed complaint form is a public record pursuant to the Washington State Public Records Act, Chapter 42.56 RCW and will be filed with the City Clerk's Office, posted on the Ethics Commission's website and provided to the person who is the subject of the complaint as well as any other individual making request for a copy of the complaint. The Ethics Commission's review of the complaint will occur in a meeting open to the public. \*\***

Pursuant to the City of Spokane's Code of Ethics, I am filing a complaint regarding conduct which I believe constitutes a violation of the City's Code of Ethics.

**Name, position, and department of person(s) I believe to have violated the Code of Ethics:**

Betsy Wilkerson, Lil Navarrete, Paul Dillon, Kitty Klitzke, Zack Zappone and Lisa  
Name: Brown

Position/Title: City Counsel Members and Mayor of Spokane

**Nature of Code of Ethics violation:**

What specific provision of SMC 1.04B.050 do you believe has been violated?

SMC 1.04B.050(A): — SMC 1.04B.050(A): Impropriety, abuse of position, intentional deception, lack of fairness and transparency, failure to uphold integrity, and actions that erode public trust.

Describe in as much detail as possible the alleged Code of Ethics violation conduct. Attach additional sheets of paper, if necessary. Please include all documentation you believe demonstrates a violation. Your description should include the date, location and frequency of the alleged violation.

On the night of June 16th, 2025, after a nearly 4-hour Spokane City Council  
meeting on Ordinance C36679 (a proposal to allow 7-day public camping with  
a ticket to relocate or leave), the Council initially voted 4-3 to reject the measure.  
Over 40 citizens had delivered 3-minute public testimonies, overwhelmingly opposing  
7-day allowances for public camping. The room was full. The business community  
had shown up in force. The outcome seemed final. *continued on pages 4 to 10*

**Names and positions of the persons who may have witnessed the event:**

<u>Aaron Rivkin, owner of Jacobs Ladder</u>	<u>Christine Quinn</u>
<u>Paul Atmeyer of Union Gospel</u>	<u>Linda Biel</u>
<u>Sandy Zehm</u>	<u>The vote was live on Chamel 5,</u>
<u>Sheldon Jackson</u>	<u>many residents and business</u> <u>owners watched.</u>

**Evidence or documentation**

Please list any evidence or documentation that would support your allegation of a Code of Ethics violation. Indicate whether you can personally provide that information.

1. Spokane City Council Meeting Video (Official Record)

Date of Meeting: June 16th, 2025

Source: City Council's official Facebook video archive

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/spokanecitycouncil/videos/1452568362564873>

*continued on page 11 to 12*

## Complainant Declaration

I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of Washington that to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief formed after reasonable reflection, the information in the complaint is true and correct.

Linda Biel

Complainant's Signature

6/24/2025

Date

Date and Place (e.g. City, State)

6/24/2025 Spokane, WA

Name (please print): Linda Biel

Address: 104 S. Division St.

Phone Number(s): (509) 863-6234

E-Mail Address: lindabiel@comcast.net

But at approximately 11:25 p.m., after most attendees and media had left — and with no advance notice to the public — the Council reopened the vote under a motion for reconsideration.

The public was blindsided.

Without serious public input, the Council rushed through a newly amended version allowing 3-day camping and falsely claimed it reflected public consensus.

**False Statement by Council President Betsy Wilkerson:**

Council President Wilkerson falsely stated that many citizens who had testified earlier in the evening actually supported 3-day camping rather than the original 7-day version. This was immediately challenged by a remaining member of the public, Phil Altmeyer, who stood and corrected the record — stating unequivocally that no one testified in support of 3-day camping either.

Wilkerson's intentional misrepresentation of public testimony was used to justify a backdoor vote change — all while the vast majority of testifiers were absent, believing the matter had been resolved.

**Why This Is a Code of Ethics Violation (SMC 1.04B.050(A)):**

**Impropriety and Abuse of Authority:** Reopening the vote late at night with minimal public notice violates the principles of fairness, honesty, and transparency.

**Intentional Deception:** Council President Wilkerson's false claim misrepresented the public record and was used to manipulate the vote's outcome.

**Lack of Integrity:** Altering the ordinance to allow 3-day camping — without any input, consent, or testimony supporting that position — is a violation of the public process and public trust.

**Erosion of Democratic Legitimacy:** Rewriting legislation behind closed doors contradicts the duty to act with openness, deliberation, and respect for citizen voices.

## Statements from Elected Officials:

### Councilmember Jonathan Bingle's public response:

"It was an absolute travesty of government... People went home thinking that we listened to them. Then we pull the rug out from under them."

This reflects widespread concern — even among elected officials — that what occurred was not just poor governance, but a deliberate ethical breach.

### Allegation of Improper Influence and Potential Quid Pro Quo

During the June 16<sup>th</sup> Spokane City Council meeting, Councilmember Lili Navarrete initially voted against Ordinance C36679, aligning with overwhelming public testimony opposing extended public camping. However, later that evening — after the measure had failed, the media had departed, and most of the public had gone home — the ordinance was reintroduced and passed through a motion to reconsider.

On the City Council's recorded livestream, Councilmember Zack Zappone is visibly upset with CM Navarrete after her initial "no" vote, suggesting tension within the council regarding her decision. Not long after this visible exchange, CM Navarrete changed her vote in favor of the amended ordinance during the late-night reconsideration.

Multiple community members have raised concerns about the involvement of Mayor Lisa Brown, who allegedly applied political pressure on CM Navarrete following the ordinance's initial failure. These concerns are particularly serious given that:

CM Navarrete is leaving the council soon,

It is publicly known or believed that she has been offered another position within the City administration under Mayor Brown,

And her vote flip directly enabled the reversal of the original 4–3 decision that had reflected public consensus.

If true, this suggests the mayor may have engaged in improper influence, coercion, or offered inducements to alter the outcome of a council vote — all of which undermine the legitimacy of the public process and may violate both the Spokane Municipal Code of Ethics (SMC 1.04B.050) and the Washington State Ethics in Public Service Act.

These actions call for an immediate independent investigation to determine:

Whether CM Navarrete was promised or offered future employment by the Mayor in exchange for her vote;

Whether the Mayor or any other official used influence behind the scenes to alter the legislative process;

Whether this constitutes abuse of power, conflict of interest, or bribery under applicable municipal and state ethics laws.

This incident severely undermines public trust and should be referred for full ethics review, including testimony from councilmembers and the Mayor's office, and cross-referenced with employment timelines and communications.

**Community Impact and Ethical Breach:**

The public was misled into believing the matter concluded—only to have the outcome reversed under cover of night.

Residents and business owners demonstrated and spoke for hours, only to have their voices toyed with.

The Council's actions eroded community trust, damaged City Council credibility, and exacerbated public cynicism toward city governance.

This is a clear violation of the expectation for Council members to act with honesty, integrity, fairness, and transparency—as mandated by SMC 1.04B.050(A):

"City officers ... shall maintain the utmost standards of responsibility, trustworthiness, integrity, ... and fairness ... [and] avoid any improprieties ..."

## Violations Identified:

Impropriety and manipulation of process by reopening a failed vote late at night.

Deception and misrepresentation of public input by Council President Wilkerson.

Abuse of position and coordination outside the public process, including possible vote-trading.

Undue influence and potential quid pro quo between Mayor Brown and CM Navarrete.

Failure to uphold standards of honesty, fairness, and integrity under SMC 1.04B.050(A).

## What Should Be Done:

1. Temporary Suspension or Reconsideration of the Ordinance: Halt implementation of Ordinance C36679 until the matter is reviewed for procedural and ethical violations.

2. Public Hearing and Testimony: The Council must schedule a new hearing with proper notice and reopen the vote only after full public input has been restored, including acknowledgment of the original testimony.

3. Recusal of Involved Parties: If CM Navarrete was offered a city position, she must recuse herself from any future votes that directly benefit the Mayor's legislative agenda. The Mayor must disclose any involvement and abstain from future actions involving the ordinance until cleared.

4. Policy Reform: The Council must revise internal rules to prevent late-night vote reversals without notice, require truthfulness when referencing public input, and protect against behind-the-scenes interference.

Further Action:

1. Immediate independent ethics investigation by the Spokane Ethics Commission or an external body into:
  - a) The Mayor's communications with CM Navarrete between the first and second votes.
  - b) Any promised employment arrangements or job offers.
  - c). The circumstances under which the vote was reopened and passed.
2. Subpoenas of email, text, and call logs from June [insert date], including internal council and mayoral communications.
3. Temporary freeze on hiring CM Navarrete into any city position pending investigation.
4. Temporary Suspension or Reconsideration of the Ordinance: Halt implementation of Ordinance C36679 until the matter is reviewed for procedural and ethical violations.
5. Public censure of Council President Wilkerson for knowingly misrepresenting public testimony.
6. Public Hearing and Testimony: The Council must schedule a new hearing with proper notice and reopen the vote only AFTER full public input has been restored, including acknowledgment of the original testimony.
7. Recusal of Involved Parties: If CM Navarrete was offered a city position, she must recuse herself from any future votes that directly benefit the Mayor's legislative agenda. The Mayor must disclose any involvement and abstain from future actions involving the ordinance until cleared.
8. Policy Reform: The Council must revise internal rules to prevent late-night vote reversals without notice, require truthfulness when referencing public input, and protect against behind-the-scenes interference.



## Summary of Violation:

### Summary of Ethical Violations:

1. Reopening a public vote at 11:25 p.m. without public notice—after more than 40 citizens had spoken against Ordinance C36679 and a clear 4–3 vote had already rejected it—constitutes procedural abuse. This deprived the public of their right to meaningfully participate and created the appearance of a rigged or manipulated process.
2. Council President Betsy Wilkerson falsely stated that the majority of public testifiers supported the revised 3-day version of the ordinance. This claim was immediately debunked by a witness (Phil Altmeyer), who clarified that no one had testified in favor of the change. This was a deliberate misrepresentation used to justify a rushed vote reversal.
3. Councilmember Lili Navarrete, who initially voted against the ordinance, reversed her position under questionable circumstances. She is leaving the Council and has allegedly been offered a job within Mayor Lisa Brown's administration. Witnesses report that Mayor Brown was brought into the process after the ordinance failed. If the Mayor used her influence or promised a job in exchange for Navarrete's changed vote, this raises the specter of improper political pressure or a quid pro quo—a serious ethical and possibly legal violation.
4. Councilmember Zack Zappone was visibly upset after Navarrete's original "no" vote, and tensions were captured on video. This fuels public perception that votes were being orchestrated behind the scenes, further eroding trust.
5. The City Council's failure to preserve transparency, public trust, and procedural integrity violates the foundational principles outlined in the City's Code of Ethics and offends democratic norms. Their actions defied fairness, accountability, and honesty in direct violation of SMC 1.04B.050(A).

6. Public release of the full voting timeline, communication trail, and internal minutes related to the reconsideration motion.

7. Legislative reform requiring:

a) 24-hour notice for any motion to reconsider a vote.

b) Mandatory public testimony for any significant ordinance amendment.

c) Prohibition of job offers to elected officials within 6 months of leaving office if they are voting on related matters.

Thank you for your time, service, and careful consideration of this matter. I respectfully submit this complaint in the interest of restoring public trust and ensuring that Spokane's elected officials uphold the ethical standards our community deserves. I am available to provide any additional documentation or testimony as needed.

### *1. Spokane City Council Meeting Video (Official Record)*

*Date of Meeting: June 16th, 2025*

*Source: City Council's official Facebook video archive*

*Link: <https://www.facebook.com/spokanecitycouncil/videos/1452568362564873>*

*Key Timestamps:*

*11:25:00 – Motion for reconsideration begins*

- Councilmember Bingle's objections and public outcry*
- Public speakers respond (e.g., Phil Altmeyer correcting the false 3-day claim)*

*This video shows:*

- a) The initial vote, which failed (4–3)*
- b) The surprise motion to reconsider at approximately 11:25 p.m.*
- c) Council President Wilkerson's false statement that most testifiers supported 3-day camping*
- d) The shift in vote that allowed the amended ordinance to pass*
- e) Public outrage, Councilmember Bingle's statement calling the process a "sham" and a "travesty".*

### *2. Public Testimony (Live & Archived)*

*Over 40 citizens gave testimony opposing 7-day, camping.*

*No public support for 3-day camping was offered at any point during testimony.*

*Council President's claim to the contrary is contradicted by video and citizen correction (Phil Altmeyer at approx. June 17th 5:46:00).*

### *3. Vote Records from City Clerk / Council Minutes*

*The official record of the first vote, which failed*

*The reconsidered vote, which passed*

*These public records confirm that the outcome was changed late at night after testimony had concluded*

**4. Public Reaction & Statements from Officials**

*a) Councilmember Jonathan Bingle's public statements calling the process a "travesty"*

*b) Public comment on the council's Facebook feed documents broad public outrage*

*c) Testimony and visual records demonstrate a breach of public trust*

**5. Allegation of Improper Influence**

*a) CM Lili Navarrete's change of vote from "no" to "yes" following alleged pressure*

*b) Publicly reported or widely circulated belief that Mayor Brown offered her a future position in City Hall*

*c) Timing of her reversal and the Mayor's involvement merits investigation under ethical standards prohibiting coercion or quid pro quo*