

CITY OF SPOKANE ETHICS COMMISSION

Ethics Commission's Findings, Conclusions and Decision Regarding Complaint filed by Rowan Pugh against Council Member Bingle

FINDINGS

The Ethics Commission makes the following findings:

1. On or about May 1, 2025, Rowan Pugh filed an ethics complaint against Spokane City Council Member Jonathan Bingle.
2. Complainant Pugh alleged "Bingle has violated section N of the city code of Ethics by attempting to pass laws to discriminate against trans and other gender diverse people." Complainant Pugh alleged in the complaint that Council Member Bingle refused to answer direct questions about why he was introducing the legislation. Complainant Pugh stated that Council Member Bingle implied that Complainant Pugh was a man, which they stated that they are not. Complainant Pugh stated in the complaint that Council Member Bingle's demeanor on the phone was "incredibly unethical and morally inept and dishonest way to treat a constituent".
3. On May 1, 2025, Staff Director Megan Kapaun forwarded the complaint to the Ethics Commission.
4. In the time between the complaint being alleged and the next meeting of the Ethics Commission, Staff Director Kapaun reviewed the complaint for jurisdictional issues pursuant to SMC104B.150A to see (1) if Council Member Bingle is subject to the Code of Ethics and (2) if the alleged conduct, if found to be true constitutes prohibited conduct in violation of any provision of SMC 1.04B.050. Staff Director Kapaun determined that Council Member Bingle is subject to the Code of Ethics but that the alleged conduct, if true, is not a violation of SMC 1.04B.050 and recommended to the Ethics Commission that at the June meeting the complaint be dismissed.
5. On June 18th, 2025, the Ethics Commission held a meeting to review the complaint to determine whether, pursuant to SMC 01.04B, the Commission had jurisdiction to conduct further proceedings and whether the complaint, on its face, alleges facts that, if true, would substantiate a violation. At meeting, the Commission considered the May 1, 2025 complaint filed by Complainant Pugh in conjunction with the Code of Ethics listed in SMC 1.04B.050.

CONCLUSIONS

The Ethics Commission makes the following conclusions:

The complaint met the requirement 1.04B.140 with respect to the complaint being submitted on the correct form and by alleging a violation against Council Member Bingle as an elected official in the City of Spokane who is subject to the Ethics Code. The complaint failed, however, to identify any specific provision of the Ethics Code that if true would be a violation of the Code of Ethics and therefore failed to meet the requirement of being an ethics violation under SMC 01.04B.050. Additionally, the complaint failed to describe facts constituting a violation in sufficient detail so that

the Commission and Council Member Bingle could reasonably understand the nature of the complaint being alleged and how the conversation had with Council Member Bingle constituted a commission of a crime of moral turpitude or dishonesty relating to his duties as a City Council Member. Complainant Pugh stated concerns that he hoped the call would be recorded so that he can have Council Member Bingle explain himself and reveal his "ineptitude and dishonesty". The allegations made against Council Member Bingle, if true, are not a violation of Section N of SMC 1.04B.050.

DECISION

Based upon the Findings and Conclusions set forth above and the deliberation of the Ethics Commission, the Ethics Commission concludes that the complaint by Rowan Pugh must be dismissed pursuant to SMC 01.04B.200 on the basis that it failed to describe facts constituting a violation of the Code of Ethics by committing a crime of moral turpitude in the interaction between Council Member Bingle and Rowan Pugh.

This decision was approved by a vote of 5 to 0 of the Ethics Commission members present for and participating in the hearing.



Jennifer Huffaker, Chairperson

6/18/25

Date