



December 4, 2019

BY E-MAIL ONLY

Re: Case No. 19-2-1018-1

Dear M*****:

On October 18, 2019, you filed a complaint with this office. The complaint alleges that the Heidi Wills for Seattle committee (the “Committee”) accepted in-kind contributions in excess of the \$500 contribution limit, and concealed the source of those contributions. Although I did determine that the Committee failed to accurately and timely disclose transactions relating to the October fundraiser at issue, for which I imposed a \$200 penalty, I am dismissing your complaint alleging over-the-limit contributions and concealment. (The late-filing penalty letter is appended to this dismissal.)

DISCUSSION

***Allegation 1:** The Committee violated the \$500 contribution limit by receiving an in-kind contribution in excess of that amount.*

Our investigation found that the event space at the Olympic Rooftop Pavilion in the Hotel Ballard is priced based on a variety of factors and that the \$1,700 the Committee ultimately reported as obligations for this event was reasonable for an event held on a Tuesday night in October. The \$5,000 quote you cite in your complaint was for an event at the height of the holiday season, which is not comparable to early October.

***Allegation 2:** The Committee concealed the source of in-kind contributions to receive contributions in excess of the contribution limit.*

The initial 21-Day pre-General C4 that the Committee filed included two in-kind contributions of \$500 each from Hotel Ballard and Stoneburner Restaurant. Upon learning from this office that James Riggle likely shared a contribution limit with the Hotel Ballard, and that Mr. Riggle had already contributed the maximum to the Committee, the Committee subsequently amended that C4 on October 21, 2019 to replace those in-kind contributions with obligations to Hotel Ballard for \$500 (event space), and to Stoneburner Restaurant for \$1,200 (food). Our investigation did not find that the Committee was attempting to conceal the source of the contributions.

CONCLUSION

I do not find reasonable cause to believe that the Committee committed the material violations of the Elections Code that you allege in your complaint. If you would like to appeal the dismissal, you may do so under the Ethics and Elections Commission's Administrative Rule 4.¹

Very truly yours,



Wayne Barnett
Executive Director

Attachment: Late-filing penalty letter

Cc: Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (*Complainant's name and address redacted*)
Abbot Taylor, Treasurer, Heidi Wills for Seattle (*Complainant's name and address redacted*)

¹ Rule 4 APPEALS

- A. Upon the written request of a party aggrieved by the Executive Director's decision to dismiss a complaint, or to impose late-filing penalties under SMC 2.04.330, the action may be reviewed by the Commission.
- B. An appeal of a dismissal shall be served at the Commission's office no later than 21 days after the date of mailing the decision of which review is sought.
- C. An appeal of late-filing penalties shall be served at the Commission's office no later than 14 days after the date of mailing the decision of which review is sought.
- D. A request for review shall state the grounds therefor, and shall be no longer than twelve 8-1/2" x 11" double-spaced pages in length with margins of at least 1" on every side, and no more than 12 characters per inch.
- E. When an appeal is filed, the Executive Director's decision shall not be final until the Commission has acted on the appeal.
- F. The Commission shall act on the request at the next meeting at which it may be practicable by:
1. deciding whether to review the Executive Director's decision; and
 2. if it decides to do so, either affirming, reversing, or amending the decision.
- G. In reviewing the Executive Director's decision, the Commission shall base its review on whether the Executive Director had a rational basis for the decision, and shall only reverse or amend a decision to the extent that a rational basis is lacking.