



**State of Washington  
PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION**

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July 30, 2021

Delivered electronically to "gartrell4yakima@gmail.com"

Subject: Complaint regarding Yakima School District, School board members Norm Walker & Martha Rice, PDC Case 93799

Dear Kenton Gartrell:

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) has completed its review of the complaint you filed on June 16, 2021. Your complaint alleged Yakima School District School board members Norm Walker and Martha Rice may have violated RCW 42.17A.555 by using the facilities of Yakima School District to oppose your 2021 campaign for Yakima School Board, thereby assisting the campaign of your opponent.

PDC staff reviewed your allegations, including the supplemental complaint information; the applicable statute and rules; and the responses provided by Norm Walker and Martha Rice, to determine whether the record supports a finding of one or more violations.

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

**Norm Walker**

- Norm Walker acknowledged inadvertently using his Yakima School District email to contact Michelle Perry regarding her endorsement of Mr. Gartrell's candidacy for Yakima School District Board of Directors.
- Michelle Perry is a school director in Sunnyside School District and a member of the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA), an organization to which Norm Walker and Martha Rice also belong as school directors in Yakima School District.
- Mr. Walker said he initially contacted Ms. Perry not because of who the candidate was but because of his concern that as Vice President of WSSDA Ms. Perry may have used her official position to favor one candidate over another candidate. Mr. Walker said his email listed no specifics, but simply stated he had a concern and asked for a return call. Mr. Walker stated his initial email was the only email concerning this matter using his school district account.
- Mr. Walker said he later did some research on Mr. Gartrell and found a Yakima Herald-Republic newspaper article that revealed some concerning observed public behavior on Mr. Gartrell's part.

Mr. Walker said he forwarded the article to Ms. Perry using his personal email account and expressed concern about the public behavior of Mr. Gartrell. Mr. Walker said he has had no other attempted communications with Ms. Perry.

- Mr. Walker said he has never discussed this issue with Graciella Villanueva, a Yakima School District board member, by email, phone, or any other means. Mr. Walker said he has made no public comments concerning Mr. Gartrell's candidacy by email or any other form of media and has not offered any public endorsements or comments concerning any of the candidates.

#### **Martha Rice**

- Martha Rice, Yakima School Board President, said she received from the District Superintendent's Executive Assistant, on June 16, 2021, a copy of a complaint from by Mr. Gartrell, which included a public records request, concerning school board member Norm Walker. Ms. Rice said it is common for the Superintendent's office to communicate with board members about matters of mutual interest or concern.
- Ms. Rice acknowledged placing a call to Michelle Perry on June 16, 2021, shortly after receiving a copy of the complaint from the Superintendent's office. Ms. Rice said she left her number and asked Ms. Perry to return her call but did not indicate the purpose of her call. Ms. Rice said her call was not returned and said she has not spoken to Ms. Perry either at the time of her call or since.
- Ms. Rice denied that three Yakima School Board members "coordinated and conspired against Mr. Gartrell" to pressure his endorser, Michelle Perry, to remove her endorsement.
- Ms. Rice stated she used her personal computer equipment and personal email account in the communications identified by Mr. Gartrell.

The only use of Yakima School District facilities was one email from Norm Walker to contact Michelle Perry regarding Ms. Perry's endorsement of your candidacy for Yakima School Director. The email did not specify the nature of Mr. Walker's concern and did not express support or opposition for your campaign or for the campaign of your opponent.

Based on these findings, staff has determined that in this instance Norm Walker's phone call to Michelle Perry does not amount to a violation of RCW 42.17A.555 warranting further investigation.

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, you may contact Phil Stutzman at 360-664-8853, toll-free at 1-877-601-2828, or by e-mail at [pdc@pdc.wa.gov](mailto:pdc@pdc.wa.gov).

Sincerely,

*Electronically Signed Philip E. Stutzman*

Phil Stutzman  
Compliance Officer

Endorsed by,

*Electronically Signed Kim Bradford*

Kim Bradford  
Deputy Director  
For Peter Lavallee  
Executive Director

cc: Norm Walker, Yakima School Board member  
Martha Rice, Yakima School Board member