

| Respondent Name |
|---|
| William Armacost |
| Complainant Name |
| Marsha Maguire |
| Complaint Description |
| <p>Marsha Maguire Thu, 29 Jul 2021 at 5:35 PM)</p> <p>Mayor William Armacost of Sequim, WA, reserved the City Council Chambers in Sequim City Hall (via emails on July 22 and 23, attached) for a "candidate forum" organized and run by the "Independent Advisory Association" (IAA), a political group that seems to have no existence as a legal entity. The two principals of the IAA, Donald (Donnie) Hall and Jim McEntire (they are the only two people named as being part of the IAA at all), state on the IAA website that although the IAA is nonpartisan, its purpose is to recruit and train "populist" candidates to run for nonpartisan office (restoreclallam.com).</p> <p>However, both Mr. Hall and Mr. McEntire represent the Clallam County Republican Party as members of the current Executive Board of that party. In fact, Mr. Hall's title on the Clallam County Republicans Executive Board for 2021-2022 is "Campaign and Strategy Committee Chair" (https://clallamrepublicans.org/party-leadership/). The IAA website states that the IAA exists because "The Clallam County Republican Party is not positioned to effectively aid candidates in nonpartisan offices." That is the mission of the IAA – to get Republican candidates ("conservative candidates" https://clallamrepublicans.org/2021-elections/) elected to nonpartisan offices. To that end, the IAA and the Clallam Republicans jointly offered a "seminar" in March 2021 on how to run for office (advertised on the Clallam Republicans website and, to my knowledge, nowhere else). And potential candidates have signed up; in fact, the IAA has five of their candidates (described on their website as "our candidates") running for all five of the open seats on the Sequim City Council. Three of those IAA candidates are appointed incumbents.</p> <p>The IAA website explains the group's purpose by stating, "The election process in Washington State is complex and confusing with disparate sources of information and mandates." But if the Republican Party is concerned that the process nonpartisan candidates must navigate is too complex and confusing, should they not attempt, in an open manner, to work toward correcting that process for all candidates? Rather than setting up a shell organization that represents a powerful political party? For the two IAA principals to pose as "nonpartisan" when they clearly represent the Clallam Republicans is concerning enough. To use that dubious argument to sponsor candidate events not only on Sequim city property but in the very chambers of the seats the candidates are competing for is truly disturbing. How is this not a violation of RCW 42.17A.555? If it isn't, any political party can set up a shell organization and use government resources to promote their candidates. Moreover, this makes it appear that the city supports the candidates sponsored by the IAA (three of whom are appointed incumbents).</p> <p>I'd like to add that Mayor Armacost was himself listed (and is still listed) on the IAA website as an IAA candidate (https://www.restoreclallam.com/our-candidates). As the attached email (the result</p> |

of a public records request) shows, Mr. Armacost requested the use of the City Council Chambers for the IAA candidate event. But he stated in the email, "We would be having a candidate forum" – who is "we"? Is he representing the IAA? The City of Sequim? As I understand it, if the mayor reserves a city-owned property or venue, no fee is charged. It's not clear in the email if the IAA (Mr. Hall? Mr. McEntire? – given that there is no entity called the IAA) would be charged a fee.

The questions that will be posed to the candidates at the IAA "forum," as Mr. Hall explained to invited candidates, will all originate from the IAA (Mr. Hall, Mr. McEntire). The IAA will control the rules on timing, follow-up questions, etc., and only residents living within Sequim city limits will be permitted to attend. Neither Mr. Hall nor Mr. McEntire live within Sequim city limits – will they be permitted to attend? No member of the public will be permitted to ask questions. What they will hear – all they will hear – are questions formulated to represent one political party's point of view. How does this benefit the public? It would instead seem to benefit the Clallam Republican Party.

Wouldn't it be more transparent, more fair, and more beneficial for voters and taxpayers alike to be able to actively participate in a truly nonpartisan candidate forum? If a political party is behind a candidate meet-and-greet, fine, but it should be open about its role, and the event should not be held on government property or seemingly sanctioned by nonpartisan government officials. Thank you.

What impact does the alleged violation(s) have on the public?

Using municipal grounds for a partisan event, under the pretense that the event is nonpartisan, and especially if a government official arranges the event and there is any chance that the event will be funded by that city government, is a misuse of taxpayer dollars. It also misleads the public by appearing to be sanctioned by nonpartisan municipal government. Establishing a shell organization to act in the interests of a political party is not honest, transparent conduct and also misleads voters and the public in general.

List of attached evidence or contact information where evidence may be found

Emails (combined into a single document) between Sequim Mayor William Armacost and city staff member Karen Abbott, July 22-23, 2021.

List of potential witnesses with contact information to reach them

Karen Hogan (made the public records request for the mayor's emails)

Certification (Complainant)

I certify (or declare) under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that information provided with this complaint is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Karen Abbott

From: William Armacost
Sent: Friday, July 23, 2021 11:15 AM
To: Karen Abbott
Subject: Re: Council Chamber rental

Hi Karen ,

Thank you . Have a great weekend .

Mayor Armacost

From: Karen Abbott <kabbott@sequimwa.gov>
Sent: Friday, July 23, 2021 11:00 AM
To: William Armacost <warmacost@sequimwa.gov>
Subject: RE: Council Chamber rental

Ok, thank you for the info. I will block out those dates and times for the Council Chambers.

Karen Abbott
Administrative Assistant II - City Managers Office
360-582-2454
kabbott@sequimwa.gov
City of Sequim, 152 W. Cedar St., Sequim WA 98382



From: William Armacost <warmacost@sequimwa.gov>
Sent: Friday, July 23, 2021 10:56 AM
To: Karen Abbott <kabbott@sequimwa.gov>
Subject: Re: Council Chamber rental

Hi Karen ,

The times for renting the Council Chambers would be from 6:00 To 9:00 PM
We would be having a candidate forum. We used the chambers for the same event two years ago when myself and Deputy Mayor Ferrell were running for office . With five council seats up for election the public will appreciate the opportunity to hear from the candidates .
I thank you in advance for your help .

Mayor Armacost

From: Karen Abbott <kabbott@sequimwa.gov>
Sent: Thursday, July 22, 2021 3:44 PM
To: William Armacost <warmacost@sequimwa.gov>
Subject: Council Chamber rental

Good afternoon. I see you would like to reserve the Council Chamber for August 24th and 25th and again on October 19th and 20th. Are these full day rentals? And, what is the event?

Thank you.

Karen Abbott
Administrative Assistant II - City Managers Office
360-582-2454
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