



State of Washington
PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION

711 Capitol Way Rm. 206, PO Box 40908 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0908
(360) 753-1111 • FAX (360) 753-1112
Toll Free 1-877-601-2828 • E-mail: pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov • Website: www.pdcca.wa.gov

February 14, 2023

Sent electronically to Roselyn Marcus, Legal Counsel for Steven Drew

Subject: Complaint filed by Glen Morgan, PDC Case 112911

Ms. Marcus:

Enclosed is a copy of an electronic letter addressed to, and sent to you on behalf of your client, Steven Drew, concerning a complaint filed by Glen Morgan.

The receipt of the Statement of Understanding signed by Mr. Drew and the \$150 civil penalty assessed in this matter in accordance with WAC 390-37-143 (Brief Enforcement Penalty Schedule), acknowledging one violation of RCW 42.17A.565 by knowingly soliciting a contribution from a Thurston County Assessor employee in February of 2022, resolves this matter.

The PDC has dismissed this matter in accordance with RCW 42.17A.755(1). Thank you for your cooperation and assistance in resolving this matter. If you have questions, please contact PDC Compliance Officer Kurt Young by e-mail.

Sincerely,

Endorsed by,

/s _____

Electronically Signed Kurt Young
PDC Compliance Officer

/s _____

Electronically Signed Peter Lavallee
PDC Executive Director



Public Disclosure Commission
Shining Light on Washington Politics Since 1972



State of Washington

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION

711 Capitol Way Rm. 206, PO Box 40908 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0908

(360) 753-1111 • FAX (360) 753-1112

Toll Free 1-877-601-2828 • E-mail: pdcc@pdcc.wa.gov • Website: www.pdcca.wa.gov

February 14, 2023

Sent electronically to Glen Morgan

Subject: Complaint filed against Steven Drew, PDC Case 112911

Glen Morgan:

Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) staff has completed its review and investigation of the complaint you filed on October 4, 2022, against Steven Drew, the incumbent Thurston County Assessor, and a candidate for re-election to that office in 2022.

Specifically, the complaint alleged that Steven Drew violated: (1) RCW 42.17A.565 on one occasion by knowingly soliciting a contribution from a Thurston County Assessor employee in February of 2022; and (2) RCW 42.17A.555 by using the facilities of the Thurston County Assessor's Office to assist his 2022 Campaign for re-election to the office of Thurston County Assessor.

PDC staff reviewed the allegations listed in the complaint; the applicable statutes, rules, and reporting requirements; select 2022 Monetary Contributions Reports (C-3 reports) filed by the Steven Drew Campaign; queried the PDC contribution and expenditure databases; and the email responses from Mr. Drew and Roselyn Marcus, Legal Counsel for Mr. Drew, to determine whether the record supports a finding of one or more violations.

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

- On May 9, 2019, Steven Drew filed a Candidate Registration declaring his candidacy for re-election to the office of Thurston County Assessor in 2022, selecting the Full Reporting Option and listing Rhendra Strub as his Ministerial Treasurer. Mr. Drew was elected Thurston County Assessor in 2010, and he was re-elected to that office in 2014, 2018, and in 2022.
- In his October 13, 2022, response to the allegations listed in the complaint Mr. Drew stated that the "complaint alleges two violations. The first allegation relates to a property tax publication which was developed and distributed in the normal and regular conduct of the Assessor's Office. The second allegation deals with a campaign contribution from my former deputy. I will address each allegation separately."

Alleged violation of RCW 42.17A.565: Knowingly soliciting a contribution from an employee

- **RCW 42.17A.565(1)** states “No state or local official or state or local official's agent may knowingly solicit, directly or indirectly, a contribution to a candidate for public office, political party, or political committee from an employee in the state or local official's agency.”
- On February 28, 2022, the 2022 Steven Drew for County Assessor Campaign (Campaign) filed a C-3 report disclosing five monetary contributions that were received and deposited on February 28, 2022. One of the contributors disclosed on the C-3 report was Michael Brooks, Deputy Thurston County Assessor, who made a \$250 contribution.
- Mr. Drew stated that in late Feb and early March of 2022, *“I made many fundraising calls, that included calls to prior donors. Using my prior contributor's list, when Mike's (Michael Brooks) name came up, I was just thinking of him as a friend and prior supporter.”*
- Mr. Drew stated that he infrequently called “...people for contributions at their place of business, so these calls often occurred in the evening or on weekends for those not retired. Such was the case when I called Mike and asked for a modest contribution. He immediately said yes, and I thanked him. He said he would contribute by check.”
- PDC staff reviewed the 2014 Steven Drew Campaign contributors and found that on August 4, 2014, Michael Brooks made a \$500 monetary contribution to the 2014 Steven Drew Re-election Campaign for Thurston County Assessor. The C-3 report disclosed Mr. Brooks's Employer as Thurston County and his Occupation as Thurston County Deputy Assessor.
- On January 23, 2023, PDC staff received a signed Statement of Understanding (SOU) completed by Mr. Drew, acknowledging one violation of RCW 42.17A.565 by knowingly soliciting a contribution from a Thurston County Assessor employee in February of 2022, along with a check for \$150 for penalty assessed in the matter. The signed SOU and \$150 penalty payment resolve the allegation concerning the violation for soliciting a contribution from an employee.

Alleged violations of RCW 42.17A.555: Use of Thurston County Assessor facilities to support his candidacy for re-election in 2022.

- **RCW 42.17A.555** states in part that no public facilities can be used by or authorized to be used, either directly or indirectly by any local elected or appointed official or public employee, to support or oppose any candidate or ballot proposition.
- The complaint alleged two separate violations of RCW 42.17A.555 by Steven Drew that included:
 1. Alleged violation of RCW 42.17A.555 by using Thurston County Assessor facilities and resources to produce and distribute a 2022 “Property Tax” publication prior to the 2022 election cycle that supported Mr. Drew's Assessor re-election campaign; and
 2. Alleged violation of RCW 42.17A.555 by using Thurston County Assessor facilities to solicit and receive a contribution from an employee for his 2022 re-election Campaign.

Allegation #1: 2022 Thurston County Assessor's Office "Property Tax" publication

- Mr. Drew stated that in late calendar year 2020, Thurston County Assessor employees working in the field "began experiencing frequent hostility while conducting property inspections." He stated that the Assessor employees wore bright neon vests which clearly identified the employees as "ASSESSOR" employees, had photo ID badges which were properly displayed, and arrived in Thurston County vehicles that were clearly marked.
- Mr. Drew stated that the parcel inspection issue "posed a unique problem that was studied by many prior to arriving at the mailing idea."
- Mr. Drew stated the mailing idea combined the property tax valuation and taxation information required in RCW 84.40.045, while also providing information needed to address the Assessor employee parcel inspection safety concerns. He stated that the total cost of the mailing was projected to be "\$17,000 less than sending two mailings." He added that the property valuation notices are required by statute to be mailed between June 1 and 30 days after the closing of the tax rolls, which for 2022 was July 29, 2022.
- Mr. Drew stated that "the project to change the "Property Tax" (actually a Property Value Change Notice) publication has been in the works for more than a year" and his office solicited input from Thurston County Assessor employees, the union, risk management office, and from other county assessors. He attached to the response a March 18-23, 2022, email string between himself and Linda Hjelle, Snohomish County Assessor, in which they discussed an alternative to mailing the standard 4" x 5" property tax valuation cards.
- Mr. Drew stated that this email, in part "represents the outreach we did, and the information received as a result of this outreach." He stated that once the County made the decision to change from the postcard to the letter publication, the "Assessor's Office requested and received additional funding for this new mailing from the Board of Commissioners in the fall of 2021."
- Mr. Drew stated that the 2022 "Property Tax" publication: (1) provided information stating that property values and taxes do not change in proportion to each other; (2) explained why the Assessor's Office inspected parcels and property; (3) detailed which regions the Assessor's Office will be inspecting next; (4) showed how Thurston County Assessor employees and vehicles are identified and marked; and (5) asks the public to be kind to Assessor employees as they carry out their property inspections in the field.
- Mr. Drew stated the 2022 Property Tax publication was designed to provide the statutorily required information about property taxes in accordance with RCW 84.40.045 and WAC 458-12-360. He stated the publication also provided "additional information to both educate the public and provide a safer working environment for my employees. All these efforts are within the authority and conduct of the Assessor's Office." He stated the information did not support or mention his candidacy for re-election and was not intended to assist his candidacy for Assessor.

Allegation #2: Use of Thurston County facilities to solicit/receive a contribution

- The second allegation was that Mr. Drew violated RCW 42.17A.555 by using Thurston County Assessor facilities to solicit and receive a contribution from Michael Brooks, Deputy Chief Assessor for Thurston County for his 2022 re-election Campaign.
- Mr. Drew stated that a few days after his February 2022 personal telephone call with Mr. Brooks in which he solicited a monetary contribution for his re-election Campaign, he arranged to pick up the contribution check “at the end of a remote meeting.” He stated that Mr. Brooks informed “me that he had the contribution check for me to pick up ‘in an envelope.’”
- Mr. Drew stated that since he “did not want to use the facilities of the office, I remember telling him that I would swing by the office but could not receive the check in the building.” He stated that Mr. Brooks “offered to meet me in the public parking lot and I said I would give him a call when I arrived.”
- Mr. Drew stated that when Mr. Brooks came out of the building and into the parking lot, “he handed me the envelope, I thanked him and wished him a good afternoon. I did not ask Mike for or receive any further contributions.”

Based on these findings, PDC staff found no evidence of further violations that would require conducting a more formal investigation into the complaint or pursuing any enforcement action in this instance.

As noted above, PDC staff received a signed Statement of Understanding (SOU) completed by Mr. Drew, acknowledging one violation of RCW 42.17A.565 for knowingly soliciting a contribution from a Thurston County Assessor employee in February of 2022, and paying a \$150 civil penalty that was assessed in the matter to resolve this allegation. Concerning the remaining allegations, PDC staff found no evidence that Mr. Drew used Thurston County Assessor resources or facilities to support his 2022 candidacy for re-election in violation of RCW 42.17A.555.

The PDC has dismissed this matter in accordance with RCW 42.17A.755(1). If you have questions, please contact PDC Compliance Officer Kurt Young by e-mail.

Sincerely,

/s _____
Electronically Signed Kurt Young
Compliance Officer

Endorsed by,

/s _____
Electronically Signed Peter Lavalley
PDC Executive Director



cc: Steven Drew and Roselyn Marcus, Legal Counsel