

Respondent Names
Kent School Board of Directors
Complainant Name
Joseph Michael Riley
Complaint Description
<p><u>Joe Riley</u> reported via the portal (Fri, 25 Oct 2024 at 11:05 AM)</p> <p>On October 21, 2024, the Kent School District published a video to their YouTube channel titled "<i>What happens if the Levy fails?</i>". This video is just under 3 minutes long and shows Deputy Superintendent Wade Barringer postulating some impacts if the levy on the November ballot were to fail. The video makes multiple claims that the levy failure will result in impacts to the general fund, which would then impact staffing and programs within KSD. However, the video mentions no further details on that impact. There is no mention of a timeline, how many staff would be cut, or even how much money would need to be taken from the general fund.</p> <p>Furthermore, the video contradicts many prior statements made by district leaders. On August 21, the district presented, and the board approved, a budget for the 24-25 school year. This budget was submitted assuming that the levy would fail in November, yet there were no mentions of staffing cuts due to this assumption. After specifically mentioning that the 24-25 budget was developed without the new levy funds, Lisa Tylor merely says that "<i>we might have to restructure some of our upcoming projects</i>".</p> <p>Additionally, on October 15, during a Levy Listening Session hosted by the district, I specifically asked questions about the plan should the levy fail. Note that this listening session was held 6 days prior to the video being uploaded. I was told that the 2024 levy projects were not "emergencies", that the district would probably be fine for one to two years, and that the district would be choosing to utilize general fund dollars rather than the existing capital fund dollars from the prior levy. None of these facts were mentioned on the video.</p> <p>The video appears to be intended to drum up support for the levy, just as ballots are being received, by vaguely threatening to cut staff. The lack of details in the video, coupled with the prior contradictory statements, do not make this a fair and objective presentation of facts.</p>
What impact does the alleged violation(s) have on the public?
The video is inflammatory and appears to use a threat of staffing cuts to gain support for the levy.
List of attached evidence or contact information where evidence may be found
Video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqhMCbw7phk Quote from timestamp 1:16

"...the district will have to make cuts in areas that impact kids. As a reminder, over 80% of our district budget is spent on personnel. So when we talk about accessing the general fund to pay for things, it unfortunately means cutting positions."

Quote from timestamp 2:29

"The potential failure of the capital and technology replacement levy carries significant risks for our community. Without the necessary funding, we face job losses that could impact our dedicated staff, along with the deterioration of essential safety systems and equipment repairs. These cuts can not only threaten our students learning environments, but also the safety and well being of our entire school community."

Prior Evidence Contradicting the Video:

Lisa Tylor, Director of Budget - Aug 21 Board Meeting - 34:09 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJJMA8D3Rtc&t=2049s>

"...so the fiscal year 24-25 budget has been developed assuming our current levy is coming to an end at the end of this year...you can see there is really no harm in running out of funds for another year, I say that cautiously...as we go out for the levy in the fall, it's kind of imperative that we're successful with that otherwise we might have to restructure some of our upcoming projects..."

Brett Scribner, Assistant Director of Capital Planning - Oct 15 Levy Listening Session - 32:34

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7WIVTPn3og&t=1954s>

"...I'll go back to Joe's question here, he was wondering if the levy fails if it would immediately impact the general fund, and I would say no. The general fund would only be impacted if we suffered a major failure of multiple systems and although we ask for the money now and we have the project slated to go into design in advance of a failure, we don't anticipate a major failure right away. I think, you know, this first year maybe two years we would be okay..."

Wade Barringer, Deputy Superintendent - Oct 15 Levy Listening Session - 34:00 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7WIVTPn3og&t=2040s>

"...well, I would say that the 2024 levy is emergent critical projects, just because they're emergent or critical doesn't mean they're emergencies...Could any one of them become an amergency? Absolutely. Are we calling them all emergencies? No, not right now..."

Dave Bussard, Executive Director of Operations - Oct 15 Levy Listening Session - 26:06 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7WIVTPn3og&t=1566s>

"...for the past few years, we have been listening to our community about why do we change a project...the remaining [2018 levy] fund is already, the remaining capital dollars in the levy, are already earmarked for projects and we want to keep those projects earmarked...what we want to do is we want to make sure our commitment to the community stays intact, when we

say we're going to do something, that's intentional and we're going to do it, so that's why we would take the general fund for anything that's on this [proposed 2024] levy if it doesn't pass..."

List of potential witnesses with contact information to reach them

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.