CITY OF LIBERTY LAKE
Office of the Mayor

June 9, 2017

Via email
pdc@pdc.wa.gov

Fox Blackhorn
Compliance Coordinator
Public Disclosure Commission

RE: Complaint Alleging Violation of RCW 42.17A.555 by City of Liberty Lake Mayor Steve Peterson and Councilmember Dan Dunne

Dear Mr. Blackhorn:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the alleged violation of RCW 42.17A.555 received by the Public Disclosure Commission ("PDC") from Ms. Jessica McGuire. Given the allegations involve both Mayor Steve Peterson and City Councilmember Dan Dunne, we are providing this letter as a collective response.

Initially, it is worth noting that the complainant, Ms. McGuire is a former City Councilmember for the City of Liberty Lake ("City"). While her role as a City Councilmember does not alleviate our responsibility as Mayor and City Councilmember to observe relevant campaign laws, it is disheartening to hear that Ms. McGuire would resign her position effective immediately on May 31st, and then file a complaint with the PDC only two days later on June 2nd without even attempting to discuss the matter with us to better understand our discussions and intent.

Since January 2017, the City Council has engaged City staff, community stakeholders, and community citizens in a very public process to determine the citizens' need for the construction of a new Community Center ("Project"). It has been a very robust discussion, including the size, scope, and amount of funding necessary to complete the Project. Numerous public meetings were held between January and May 2017, including both regularly scheduled City Council meetings and subsequent special meetings that were called for the sole purpose of discussing the Project. Ms. McGuire was an active participate during many of these meetings, although she did not attend the regularly scheduled meeting on May 2, 2017, when the City Council approved an August ballot measure.

Throughout these meetings, City Councilmembers expressed their opinions, ideas, and beliefs on what the Project should or should not entail and what would be necessary to support such a Project. As part of the discussions, it was certainly evident that we supported the Project and that we believed it should be placed on the August ballot for the community to vote in favor of or against the Project. We also believed it was important that support would be required by us outside of City facilities to inform the community, among other things, about its' need, cost(s), and usage.

However, at no time did we, or the City, intend to use public facilities or resources to support or oppose the Project. Rather, it was a discussion amongst all participants, including us, about the Project as a whole. Unfortunately, Ms. McGuire wants to categorize our very limited discussions during the regularly scheduled meeting on May 16th without any context whatsoever and instead focuses on a few minutes during one meeting.

During the course of the May 16th meeting, City Administrator, Ms. Katy Allen, was updating the City Council on the Project and that she was working with the City's Finance Director, Mr. RJ Stevenson, on a particular fact sheet that could be provided to citizens to better understand the entirety of the Project, including budget and tax implications, the size and scope of the Project, and the use of the facility. The informational sheet was to be brought back to the City Council at a later date for review and consideration, and if necessary, revisions by the City Council prior to dissemination to the community.

As part of that dialogue, Mayor Peterson was under the impression that an organization in support of the Project was having an upcoming meeting the following week if anyone was interested in attending. This comment referred back to the City Council's prior discussions in March and April that City Councilmembers' needed to support the Project if they chose to put it forward. In the context of those discussions, Mayor Peterson was reminding members that their personal support and getting the word out was desired. At that time, Councilmember Dunne chose to speak up and personally pledged $200.00 to the organization's efforts, but such pledge did not involve any public funds or resources. No further dialogue occurred on the matter and the meeting continued with other agenda items.

The views expressed by us were intended to be informative and part of our personal views. To the extent a violation may have occurred, it was never our intent or desire to commit such a violation. While we are both supporters of the Project, we do recognize that there are likely opposing views and welcome any dialogue with those individuals. We also understand that "perception is reality" and sometimes an attempt to be informative can lead to a blurring of our personal views and roles as Mayor and City Councilmember.

We thank you again for the opportunity to respond to Ms. McGuire's complaint and hope the PDC understands the context of our discussions, including those that occurred over many months.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions. We look forward to the PDC's response.

Respectively submitted,

Mayor Steve Peterson

6-9-2017

City Councilmember Dan Dunne