



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

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December 19, 2018

Delivered electronically to Amit Ranade, legal counsel for Pierce County Library System/Mary Getchell

Subject: Pierce County Library System/Mary Getchell Complaint Return Letter with SOU; PDC Case 41447

Mr. Ranade:

Below is a copy of an electronic letter sent to Connor Edwards concerning the complaint he filed with the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) against your client the Pierce County Library System (PCLC), and Mary Getchell, PCLS Marketing and Communications Director.

On December 13, 2018, the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) notified PDC staff confirming the receipt of an executed Statement of Understanding (SOU) signed by Mary Getchell, on behalf of the PCLS, along with a \$150 penalty payment. The SOU signed by Ms. Getchell acknowledged a violation of RCW 42.17A.555.

Based on this information, the PDC has dismissed this matter in accordance with RCW 42.17A.755(1). If you have questions, please contact PDC staff member Kurt Young by e-mail at kurt.young@pdc.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Endorsed by,

/s _____
Kurt Young, Compliance Officer

/s _____
BG Sandahl, Deputy Director
For Peter Lavalley, Executive Director





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December 19, 2018

Sent electronically to Connor Edwards

Subject: Pierce County Library System/Mary Getchell Complaint Return Letter with SOU; PDC Case 41447

Mr. Edwards:

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) has completed its review of the complaint you filed on September 29, 2018 against the Pierce County Library System (PCLS). The complaint alleged that PCLS spent public funds for Facebook advertisements in support of Proposition No. 1, a PCLS levy lid lift on the November 6, 2018 general election ballot.

PDC staff reviewed the allegation listed in the complaint you filed, the statutes, rules and PDC Interpretation #04-02 “Guidelines for Local Agencies in Election Campaigns”, and the response to the complaint provided by Amit Ranade, an attorney with Hillis Clark Martin & Peterson P.S., on behalf of the PCLS, and Mary Getchell, PCLS Marketing and Communications Director. Based on staff’s review, we found the following:

- The PCLS was established in 1946, and currently has 19 libraries located throughout Pierce County plus an Administrative Center providing services to more than 322,000 cardholders, according to 2017 PCLS statistics.
- PCLS adopted Resolution 2018-07 at the July 11, 2018 meeting, and at that meeting the PCLS Board of Trustees placed a library levy lid lift on the November 6, 2018 general election ballot to restore the library’s property tax levy rate to the full amount of 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.
- On September 15, 2018, the Tacoma News Tribune (TNT) featured an article entitled “Replace libraries with Amazon? No, we must pay to keep them public.” The article in the TNT stated *“This fall, Pierce County voters will be asked to come to the rescue by raising the library tax rate for the first time in a dozen years. We hope they don’t hesitate to mark yes on the levy lid lift proposal.”*
- Mr. Ranade stated that PCLS “regularly sponsors Facebook posts to reach more of its followers” concerning the maintenance and operations of the library. He included as part of his response a copy of a Facebook printout listing 58 expenditures that PCLS had made during the period August 16, 2016 through October 15, 2018, “to boost” the number of impressions for a variety of different library-related issues.

- The expenditures listed included a \$250 expenditure made to Facebook on September 15, 2018 for the post entitled “Thank you to TNT’s editorial board for endorsing Proposition No. 1” and the posts/ advertisements were featured September 17 through 22, 2018.
- Mary Getchell, on behalf of the Pierce County Library System, posted information on its Facebook page thanking the TNT editorial board for printing an article endorsing Proposition No. 1 on the November 6, 2018, general election ballot, and then spent \$250 in library public funds to Facebook to boost that post. By spending \$250 to boost the post of the TNT endorsement of the PCLS levy lid lift, Ms. Getchell used the facilities of the Pierce County Library System to support Proposition No. 1, in violation of RCW 42.17A.555.

On December 13, 2018, the Department of Enterprise Services (DES), a state agency that processes and handles small agencies collections, notified PDC staff and confirmed the receipt of an executed Statement of Understanding (SOU) signed by Mary Getchell, on behalf of the PCLS, along with a \$150 penalty payment. The SOU signed by Ms. Getchell acknowledged a violation of RCW 42.17A.555, by spending public funds to boost a post on the PCLS’s Facebook page thanking the TNT for the TNT Editorial that supported Proposition No 1.

Based on this information, PDC staff is dismissing this matter against Ms. Getchell and the Pierce County Library System in accordance with RCW 42.17A.755(1). If you have questions, you may contact me at (360) 664-8854, toll-free at 1-877-601-2828, or by e-mail at kurt.young@pdc.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Endorsed by:

s/ _____
Kurt Young
PDC Compliance Officer

s/ _____
BG Sandahl, Deputy Director
For Peter Lavallee, Executive Director

cc: Amit Ranade, on behalf of the PCLS