

TO: Mayor Victoria Woodards and Members, Tacoma City Council  
FROM: Katie Baird, Chair, Tacoma Board of Ethics  
SUBJECT: 2019 Tacoma Board of Ethics Annual Report  
DATE: January 24, 2020

In accordance with Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 1.46.045(C)(4), I am providing you the Board's 2019 Annual Report which contains a summary of its decisions and opinions.

The Board provided an advisory opinion dated January 9, 2019 per TMC 1.46.045(E) at the request of Council Member Anders Ibsen. The Board concluded that Council Member Ibsen was not required to recuse himself of a vote regarding land use and/or zoning related legislation solely due to his occupation as a real estate agent. The Board also concluded that his need to abstain from participating in such legislation and/or disclose the extent of a potential conflict of interest would depend upon the facts and circumstances. The Board invited the Councilmember to provide additional information or seek an additional opinion if there were future concerns.

Three complaints (2019-001, 2019-002, 2019-003) were decided by the Board in 2019:

**2019-001** was an allegation that Tacoma City Manager, Elizabeth Pauli, acted improperly when she did not take corrective action regarding Tacoma Police staff who the complaint also alleged behaved unethically. The Board determined that an allegation that Ms. Pauli did not take any corrective action regarding city staff ethical misconduct, even if true, would not establish a violation of TMC 1.46. The complaint was therefore dismissed by the Board in a decision opinion dated April 2, 2019.

**2019-002** was an allegation that Tacoma Public Utility Board Member Karen Larkin had misused her position to influence city staff to take actions regarding traffic improvements. The Board determined that the complaint alleged facts which, if found to be true, would still be insufficient to constitute a violation of TMC 1.46 as it appeared that Ms. Larkin had been marking arguments based on merit dating back to 2015, that city staff had solicited and considered information from not just Ms. Larkin but all members of the affected community over a three year time period which included the complainant. The complaint was therefore dismissed by the Board in a decision opinion dated October 10, 2019.

**2019-003** was an anonymous complaint which claimed that the Mayor and City Council had acted improperly and although it did not cite any specific section of TMC 1.46 it was analyzed as an ethics complaint as it used the words "ethics" and "misconduct" in its multiple grievances. The Board determined that the complaint alleged facts which, if found to be true, would still be insufficient to constitute a violation of TMC 1.46. The complaint was therefore dismissed by the Board in a decision opinion dated December 8, 2019.

The Board appreciates the continued opportunity to serve the citizens of the City of Tacoma, and would be happy to answer any questions.

REPORT IS ISSUED AS OF THE 24th DAY OF JANUARY, 2020 BY

  
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Katie Baird  
Chair, City of Tacoma Board of Ethics