



Office of Councilmember Addison Winslow
411 Main Street
P.O Box 3420
Chico, CA 95927

February 23, 2024

Dear Vanessa Greer:

The Enforcement Division of Fair Political Practices Commission requested a response to a complaint sworn against me (Complaint No. COM-02172024-00517). The full complaint including attached screenshots was made available to me.

The complaint alleges that I have acted in my official capacity as a city councilmember with a financial conflict of interest due to my paid employment with Butte Environmental Council (BEC), a 501(c)3 organization with a mission to defend the land, air, and water of Butte County. The complaint refers specifically to a decision on April 4 2023 (in the complaint, the year is written wrong) regarding the Valley's Edge project.

The complaint contains a lot of errant speculation and confusion. For what is relevant to the conflict of interest provisions of the Political Reform Act, the allegations hinge on my 2022 Form 700s in which I disclosed my paid employment with BEC. The complaint is wrong to assume both that my employment with BEC was ongoing during my tenure as a candidate and officeholder and that the work assigned to me was related to the Valley's Edge project.

The April 4 2023 decision was regarding placement and scheduling of a vote on the Valley's Edge project following a successful referendum of the City Council's approval of the project on January 3 2023. Both of these decisions I participated in as a councilmember, voting with the majority April 4 and as the one vote of opposition January 3. I was sworn in Dec 6 2022 after winning the 2022 District 4 election ending November 8.

The paid employment referred to in my 2022 Form 700 was work as a 1099 contractor researching, writing, and presenting comments on the Chico, Oroville, and Butte County 2022 Housing Element Updates. That work extended from May to July 2022. The comments I drafted for BEC consisted of an overview of governmental constraints to the production of infill housing in the subject jurisdictions, analysis of fair housing, criticism of the Adequate Sites Inventories, and promotion of policies supporting walkable communities. The City of Chico did not include Valley's Edge in the Adequate Sites Inventory. While BEC staff and I had conversations about extending the consulting contract for the local jurisdictions besides the City of Chico after I filed to run for office in August 2022, those plans never came to fruition.

The complainant confuses this paid contract of summer 2022 with my participation as a

volunteer writing comments on the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) of the Valley's Edge Specific Plan in late 2021. Comments on the draft report had five authors, all of whom were volunteers, and were submitted before the public comment deadline of December 13 2021. The comments reviewed environmental impacts by category, questioned the merits of the project, and proposed enhanced mitigation and alternatives to be included in the Final EIR. I also wrote some of my own comments, which are also included with responses in the Final EIR, available on the City of Chico's website.

In response to criticism in the public process, the Valley's Edge project changed in important respects between the publication of the dEIR and coming before myself at the City Council on January 3 2023. As recorded in the hearing, I asked questions challenging the merits of the project, its consistency with the General Plan, and the Statement of Overriding Considerations on the significant and unavoidable environmental impacts. I made a failed substitute motion to give direction to reconsider elements of the project to support a high-quality public transit route, and ultimately voted against approval of the project. The vote was 5-1, with one councilmember recused on account of living adjacent to the project boundary.

At no point did I have a financial conflict of interest in the Valley's Edge project. Before filing to run for office I participated voluntarily in the environmental review of the Valley's Edge project and after the January 3, 2023 land use hearing on the project I participated in the referendum effort, acting quite obviously in my personal capacity and not that of the City Council that voted entirely against me on the item.

Many other matters within the complaint appear to me frivolous, but upon request I am happy to clarify any other details which generate concern in the execution of your duty to ensure fairness in the political process. I will add, however, as a point of context for this and future complaints filed by Mrs Nava that she did promise the local press she would be a "thorn in [my] side" on the night she lost the election.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the allegations and your seriousness in the matter.

Addison Winslow
District 4 City Councilmember

P.S: Mrs Nava in her sworn complaint suspects my former roommates Jared Geiser, who she refers to as "the head of the Referendum effort," and Margaret Scarpa, a Planning Commissioner, of being romantically involved. This is correct. The couple was married in spring of last year with me officiating in my capacity as an elected official in the state of California. I received no financial compensation for the service.