

To the Residents of Billings:

Let me begin by stating something plainly: I have been a consistent supporter of the Yellowstone Valley Animal Shelter since the day I joined the City Council. I've not only supported them in principle — I've worked directly with their leadership to resolve issues behind the scenes, even at their own request.

Just weeks before this unfortunate situation, YVAS Executive Director Triniti Halverson called me personally to ask for help navigating contract issues between the shelter and the City of Billings. I answered that call and stepped in to assist — no agenda, just a willingness to help bridge gaps and support the shelter.

That's the context in which I now respond — directly and firmly — to the recent allegations stemming from a private conversation I had with one of Yellowstone Valley Animal Shelter's donors.

I vehemently disagree with the way my conversation with the donor has been portrayed — both by the donor themselves and by representatives of YVAS. Their description of our discussion is misleading at best, and a flat-out mischaracterization at worst.

Let me be crystal clear about what actually occurred:

On **September 24**, I called the donor with the explicit intention of understanding their perspective and exploring ways the City Council could assist in resolving the ongoing conflict between the City and YVAS following the incinerator incident.

I began that call by saying, **and I quote**:

"I'm calling because I want to understand your perspective and how we, the City Council, can help start working to resolution. If anything in this call feels like it is approaching any kind of line then we need to stop immediately."

The donor **agreed** to that premise, and we proceeded to have a constructive, candid conversation.

During that call:

- I asked the donor how we could help address costs already incurred by YVAS — for supplies, medical treatment, and operational needs — and how those costs could be communicated to City Council so we could evaluate making the shelter whole through formal action.
- I informed the donor that I had already opened discussions with the Montana Department of Justice to use their incineration facility moving forward, in coordination with the Montana Highway Patrol — a potential long-term solution to the breakdown that caused this situation.
- At no point did I pressure the donor, attempt to influence their relationship with YVAS, or suggest that they "lean on" the shelter in any way.

I did not ask for anything inappropriate. I did not deliver any ultimatum. I did not cross a line.

To now have this conversation twisted and publicly weaponized — when my intent was clearly and openly to help — is not only disingenuous, but also damaging to the very resolution everyone claims to want.

I am more than willing to stand in the public square and answer for my words and actions. I have nothing to hide, and I stand by my record — including my record of support for YVAS.

But I will not sit quietly while an honest attempt to help is rebranded as political interference. That is not what happened, and those advancing that narrative should reflect on whether it serves progress or simply creates further division.

To the public: I remain committed to finding a workable path forward — one that supports the shelter, addresses real costs, and ensures transparency, accountability, and professionalism from all parties involved.

To YVAS: I have supported you in good faith, even when it wasn't public or politically convenient. I hope that fact will be remembered.

Respectfully,

Scott Aspenlieder

City Councilman, Ward 4

Billings, MT