

To: The Citizens of Wapato

FROM: Former Wapato Police Department Employees

Date: September 16th, 2018

Dear Citizens of Wapato:

We collectively (and individually as indicated by our signature to this document), would like to take this opportunity to inform you that most recently three senior officers of the Wapato Police Department have felt compelled by their personal ethical standards and conscience to announce their resignations from the Wapato Police Department. Since the election of Juan (legal name John) Orozco to the position of Mayor, the Wapato Police Department has lost of total of 14 employees, which includes 5 full-time police officers, one police sergeant, 6 full time corrections officers and 2 support staff members. In that same time, the Police Department has been able to recruit, test and hire only one full time police officer and one support person.

With the resignation of the latest three senior Police Officers on September 7th, 2018 the Wapato Police Department is now staffed with only one Sergeant (or acting Chief), one Detective, two full-time Police Officers and one temporary provisional officer. One of the full-time officers and the provisional officer has not been to the police academy and should not be working without the direct supervision of a fully trained and certified officer. This level of staffing will not support safe 24-hour police coverage for the City of Wapato. The staffing levels places the citizens of Wapato and the police officers in a highly dangerous situation.

This letter is being sent to the local news outlets, the Yakima County Sheriff's Office, the Yakima County Prosecutor's Office, the Washington State Attorney's General Office and others that have an interest in information that otherwise has not been available to the public and/or to refute the claims and statements made by Juan Orozco in his capacity as the Mayor of Wapato and now in his capacity as the City Administrator.

Since Mayor Orozco's election in December of 2017, he has made multiple efforts to threaten, harass and intimidate the employees of the Wapato Police Department. He has also made threats and attempted to utilize police officers to threaten, intimidate and harass council members and citizens of Wapato. He has made false statements about employees, citizens, business owners and others in the press, on social media or to other employees and citizens. Mayor Orozco's attempt to utilize members of the Wapato Police Department as his "personal enforcers" is reminiscent of the days of old when corruption and graft were the norm rather than the rule of law.

Specifically, Mayor Orozco has directed targeted enforcement actions against his personal enemies or those that refused to support his policies and actions. Those that speak against him or his administration can anticipate some type of retaliatory city action. Either additional enforcement by the police department, cancelation of building permits that were already been issued, or other uncooperative actions. We have witnessed Mayor Orozco's multiple attempts to harass citizens who speak against him. Specifically, he has contacted the employers of individuals who oppose him or his action and filed unfounded complaints, attempting to get the individual disciplined or terminated. These attempts utilized his position as the Mayor, and the influence that comes with that position, to silencing critics.

Those Police Officers and other employees who have resigned or left the Wapato Police Department feel that they have been forced into the position of making un-ethical decisions and have had their ability to honor their oath of office placed into jeopardy. It was with great regret that they felt it was necessary to resign their positions with the Wapato Police Department. They also felt that it was necessary to safeguard their certification as Washington State Peace Officers. By staying, they would have placed themselves in a position of being terminated for either false charges, lies or insubordination after having to refuse an unlawful or unethical order by the Mayor, City Administrator or those that serve as the leadership of the Wapato Police Department.

Mayor Orozco has threatened employees with adverse actions when they have made any attempt to exercise their rights under the law or under the collective bargaining agreement. Teamsters Local #760 was forced to take the unprecedented step of filing a lawsuit in Superior Court to safeguard the rights of the employees. This step was designed to provide the quickest possible relief from his harassment and intimidation tactics. Had Teamsters followed the more common practice of filing with the state Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) it would not have been heard for several months and may not have been resolved for several years. The members of Teamsters Local #760 are still hoping for some action by the court to stop Mayor Orozco's on-going and continued intimidation and harassment practices.

Mayor Orozco made numerous claims about the actions of the Union and the so called "secret ballots" of the officers. To set the record straight, the officers do not, and have never had the authority or ability to select a Chief of Police or Public Safety Director. Our only ability was to recommend and then to determine if that person was able to maintain his or her membership as part of the bargaining unit. Any vote that was taken as part of the bargaining group solely determined that the person selected by and acting on behalf of Mayor Orozco could or could not be a member of the bargaining group. Early on, we were provided the option of recommending someone for that position, but even that was limited to a select group of people that were acceptable to Mayor Orozco. We were not given the ability to vote for or select the person whom we felt was the most qualified because of the Mayor's personal dislike for that individual. Prior to agreeing to accept our limited recommendation for an "acting Chief of Police" from Mayor Orozco's acceptable candidates, Mayor Orozco required that a member of the bargaining group to recite a public thank you and acknowledge his benevolence at the council meeting.

Mayor Orozco has also misinformed the public and made statements that were untrue about the condition of the Wapato Jail, including the financial status. We are aware of multiple public records requests for budget documents, expenditure reports and other financial accounting of the City which have been refused or remain unfilled for more than six months. Mayor Orozco has made statements to the press, to citizens and on social media about what he has saved the City financially. Unfortunately, he has also refused to provide the requested documents that will refute his inaccurate, inflated and unrealistic statements.

The Wapato Police department currently lacks the support, proper leadership, supervision, and the staffing levels to operate in any effective manner. The remaining police officers are working hard to provide for their families. They are working in an unsafe environment without the proper staffing levels to maintain any reasonable safety or security for the City of Wapato or themselves.

Mayor Orozco's last act was to resign and then sign a contract appointing him to a 7-year position, paying him 95k per year. This does not include the \$500 monthly fuel stipend, and a take home Yukon Denali. Now acting as the City Administrator, he will continue to have the same authority, but will be receiving a significant pay raise and protections by the City. After his very vocal and public tirades against the past administrations contracts for the Police Chief, Fire Chief and City Clerk/Treasurer, it is perplexing that he now enters into a contract that provides more than any other person in the history of the City.

We have no confidence in the manner which this occurred, behind closed doors and without input or comment from the Citizens of Wapato. We do not believe that the actions were legal, as it does not pass any reasonable standard for occurring in an open and public meeting. They clearly passed it at a public meeting, but the contract was already written and agreed to prior to the public meeting. As some point a majority of the council clearly had to have discussed and agreed to the actions in private meetings, held outside of the public and without any prior public knowledge. In addition, the position was not opened up to the public for others to apply. There was clearly an illegal agreement or personal gain for an elected official that occurred and that should be invalidated and overturned by the State of Washington.

It is of no surprise to those of us that have worked for the City of Wapato since Mayor Orozco's election, this is the same type of action that we have witnessed time and again. However, we can no longer sit back and ignore these actions. We are no longer willing to work for the City of Wapato under these conditions, along with the false narrative that continues to be provided to the media and the citizens of Wapato.

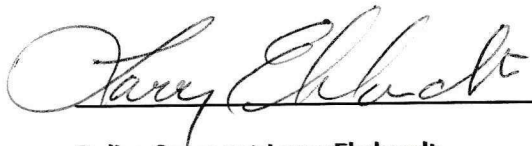
The officers and employees that have resigned or been separated from the City would like to thank the previous administration, and citizens of Wapato for allowing us to serve them for such a long time (100+ years of combined experience). The experience was tremendous and none of us can even begin to

describe how much we have learned while working for the City of Wapato. We appreciate the citizens and businesses in Wapato, to include the professional relationships we were able to make during our tenure. The Wapato community is very diverse community and it was a great experience to work for this community, we thank you.

Sincerely

Former City of Wapato Police Department Employees

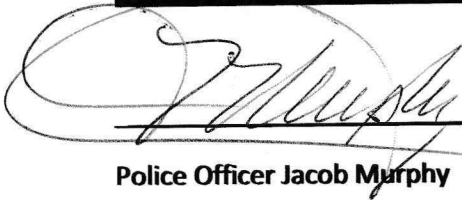
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Police Sergeant Larry Ehrhardt



Police Officer Randy Sperle



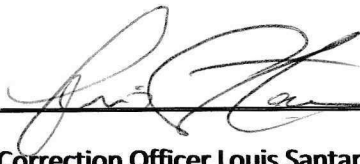
Police Officer Jacob Murphy



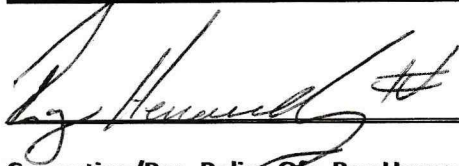
Correction Sergeant Keilen Harmon



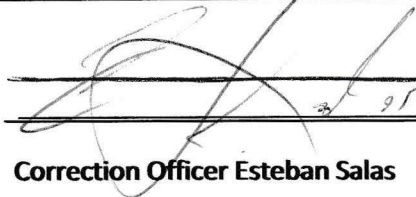
Correction Officer Karlo Stephas



Correction Officer Louis Santana



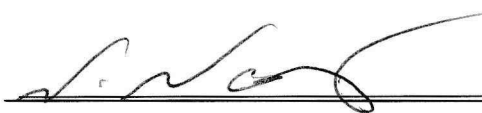
Correction/Res. Police Ofc. Ray Hernandez



Correction Officer Esteban Salas



Police Officer Andreas Eismann



Correction Officer Nicholas Nanez

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