

Ms. Kathleen Otto
Acting Clark County Manager
Public Services Building
1300 Franklin Street
Vancouver, Washington 98660

Re: Ethics Complaint re: Chair Quiring

Via email only to Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov

Dear Ms. Otto:

Pleased consider this a formal complaint that alleges that the Chair violated the Clark County Council Code of Ethics and Rules of Procedure. Based on this complaint, I am requesting that the County implement the provisions of Section 7 of the Code of Ethics and convene a review committee to evaluate the complaint and determine if sanctions are appropriate and, if so, the appropriate sanction.

The Clark County Charter, the Rules of Procedure, and the Code of Ethics are the main documents that govern the conduct of our Clark County Councilors, including the Chair. These three documents dictate the standards to which our Councilors are held and specify the role of the Chair and impose specific responsibilities on the Chair.

Section III B of the Clark County Council Rules of Procedure states “the Chair will preside over and ensure orderly, efficient council meetings. Section III B of the Clark County Council Rules of Procedures states “the Chair...will be the county’s spokesperson to articulate council policies, visions, strategies, and plans.”. The Code of Ethical Conduct for Clark County Councilors, paragraph 2 states “Councilors should promote decorum, respect of others and civility in all relationships.”

The Rules of Practice, Section XVIII. Councilor Conduct provides that:

- a) Each councilor is obligated to follow the Code of Ethical Conduct for a Clark County Councilor, which was approved May 17, 2016 and is attached as Exhibit 1; and b) In the course of responding to citizen inquiries, councilors will weigh all relevant points of view. If a meeting of the parties is necessary, councilors are responsible for setting a non-threatening atmosphere and an appropriate time frame.

The Preamble to the Code of Ethical Conduct for Clark County Councilors provides:

The opportunity to serve the public as councilor confers a sacred trust on the office holder. Stewardship of the public trust requires councilors uphold the law and act in ways consistent with the highest

standards of ethical conduct. The county council has adopted this code of ethics to promote the vitality of the democratic process in county government. In fulfilling the duties of public office, every councilor will be confronted with ethical dilemmas. The following principles are offered to encourage councilors to reflect in advance of decision making. Ultimately, the ethical course of action for a county councilor must be discerned by the dictates of individual conscience and commitment to the public interest.

Code of Ethics Violations

Beginning last week at Council time and continuing through Council time this week, the Chair violated the codes. Chair Quiring has failed to meet the requirements of the Chair position set out in the Charter and the Rules of Practice, and she has failed to promote the vitality of the democratic process in county government:

1. On June 16, 2020 the County Council unanimously passed a resolution that states “systemic racism has existed in our country for far too long,” and “the Clark County Council condemns racism in any form, and believes that the long term, system solution to the problems of impact bias, institution racism, and bigotry can and should be addressed through intentional acts.”;

2. On June 24, 2020 Chair Quiring repeatedly interrupted Councilor Lentz and failed to maintain proper decorum. The substance of the Chair’s comments, the manner in which she delivered those comments and the tone of her voice exhibited a complete disregard of her fellow councilors thoughtful and respectful discussion regarding the Sheriff’s removal of the Thin Blue Line Decal from publicly owned Sheriff’s vehicles. During that time, she disrespected her fellow councilors, disrespected the citizens listening at home by shouting down and interrupting her fellow Councilors and failed to create a climate of *efficient, effective and ethical conduct in the delivery of county services (Principle 3)*

3. By dismissing the efforts of other Councilors to stimulate a dialog on troubling issues, Chair Quiring appears to be nursing what she perceives as personal attacks against her when she should be striving *for excellence and continuous learning relative to personal development and all operations of county government (Principle)*.

4. By stating that there is no systemic racism in Clark County, Chair Quiring ignored, and spoke in contravention to, the stated principles in Resolution # 2020-06-06 adopted by the Council on June 16, 2020 and approved by her vote and

signature. Her statements, aside from being contrary to the public position of the Council, a) challenged the perceptions of many residents who have been struggling to define a meaningful response to calls for racial equity, b) denigrated several culturally specific organizations in the community, c) ignored employee discrimination cases filed against the county (with settlements funded by taxpayer dollars) over the past few years and d) disregarded several police-citizen interactions that have resulted in community anger over excessive use of force.

5. During the week following her Council Time outbursts on June 24, 2020, Chair Quiring failed to achieve an ethical balance between *the dictates of individual conscience and the commitment to the public interest* as required by the Council, insulted and minimized statements by citizen groups by stating that their reaction to her statements was “knee jerk” and continued to deny, and speak in contravention of, the principles set forth in the Resolution. These statements appear to be based on her personal opinion, not adopted public policies of the Council, and proceeded to publicly stand in opposition to the adopted Council policies, stand in opposition to an action by the elected Sheriff, and stand in opposition to a letter adopted by the council and put forth negative responses to community members.

6. Her subsequent statements compounded her violations of sections 2.2 Charter and III B of the Rules of Practice which require her to serve as the County's spokesperson and to “articulate council policies, visions, strategies and plans; represent the county before the governor, state legislature and other state and federal agencies; meet and greet important visitors; supervise constituent response processes for the council as a whole; and serve as the county's lead representative at dedications, ceremonial activities and other public events”

7. The Chair's responses to public criticism also failed to promote “*decorum, respect for others and civility in all relationships*” (Principle 2) and inconsistent with the maxim that “*The honor of holding public office necessitates that councilors behave with courtesy and respect for the dignity of others in all public relationships, including with elected officials, employees, citizens, media and representatives of other governments.*”

8. With significant protests in the community, Chair Quiring has failed to act in a leadership role to underscore, analyze, understand or improve the *efficient, effective and ethical conduct of some county services*. The significant citizen engagement in the current climate where we are examining the dynamics of systemic racism should, in and of itself, dictate attention and addressing of complaints.

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Thus, the sum total of Chair Quiring's actions clearly demonstrated that Chair Quiring has failed to "*perform the duties of public office with fairness and impartiality so to enhance public confidence in county government.*" (Principle 5). Further her actions and statements show that she has failed to engage in conduct that "*promotes county processes and practices that contribute to the perception of equality and impartialty and "support equal employment opportunity and vigorously oppose discrimination of any kind in county affairs"*."

Therefore, based upon the allegations set forth above and the Timeline and Evidence references set forth below, there is more than enough evidence to show that the Chair has violated a number of provisions that govern the conduct of our elected councilors and the provisions of Section 7 are triggered:

Any councilor charged with violating this code shall be subject to review by an ad hoc Ethics Review Committee consisting of two councilors chosen by a majority of the council and one citizen chosen by the two councilors. The chosen citizen shall chair the review committee. The committee shall investigate the charges thoroughly by interviews; review of evidence presented and/or by use of a third-party investigator.

The Ethics Review Committee shall issue a finding to the full council. If the violation is substantiated by the committee, the council may consider such action as it deems appropriate, from public admonishment to a public resolution of censure with removal of the violator from all committees on which the person is representing the county.

Please inform me when the Council will meet to select the two councilors who will serve on the Ethics Review committee. Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to the Review Committee's work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a white background with a light grid pattern. The signature appears to read "Bridget McLeman".

Bridget McLeman, PhD

Timeline and Evidence

- On June 16th, Clark County Council adopted Resolution 2020-06-06 relating to eliminating systemic racism and injustice in Clark County.
[\[https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/dept/files/council-meetings/2020/2020_Q2/2020-06-06.pdf\]](https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/dept/files/council-meetings/2020/2020_Q2/2020-06-06.pdf)
- On June 19th, Sheriff Atkins, following participation in a Juneteenth community forum and followed up with the order to remove 'thin blue line' decals and symbols from Sheriff's Office buildings and equipment.

[\[https://www.beheardvancouver.org/racialjustice/news_feed/racial-justice-listening-session-notes?fbclid=IwAR2rSfiXaopwCuOJ_GWPf_Kr8G462-tvH8a9DcjcQwgcODuS5t5eqdGeA3c\]](https://www.beheardvancouver.org/racialjustice/news_feed/racial-justice-listening-session-notes?fbclid=IwAR2rSfiXaopwCuOJ_GWPf_Kr8G462-tvH8a9DcjcQwgcODuS5t5eqdGeA3c)

News story: https://www.kptv.com/news/clark-county-sheriff-tells-workers-to-remove-thin-blue-line-flag/article_ab8a0e02-b5a9-11ea-924b-b3fa13fccc87.html

- During Clark County Council Time on Wednesday June 24, following a significant discussion in which Chair Quiring disagreed with the underlying issue of systemic racism and with the action of the Clark County Sheriff removing 'thin blue line' symbols, Council Chair Quiring refused to sign a proposed letter supporting the actions of the Sheriff. The letter passed with four of five Councilors agreeing to sign the letter.

https://www.clark.wa.gov/sites/default/files/dept/files/council-meetings/2020/2020_Q2/062420_CouncilTimeAudio.mp3

- Following community criticism, Council Quiring responded with texts and interviews reaffirming her position and denigrating those who called for her resignation given the dissatisfaction with her statements.
- Top Clark County Official: 'I Do Not Believe Systemic Racism Exists In Our County'
<https://www.opb.org/news/article/official-denies-systemic-racism-clark-county-washington/?fbclid=IwAR0yn8BztjjDhZPJRnr1ideekMoK7nXIzdrsxGL0ZXKb1H39iFjSo8HQD8s>
PB June 25, 2020 11:15 a.m. | Updated: June 28, 2020 10:38 a.m.
- KGW video clip

<https://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/vancouver/top-elected-official-in-clark-county-denies-systemic-racism-exists-there-draws-ire/283-695fbad9-ac3e-43ea-9d6e->

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[33f718475d94?fbclid=IwAR2rbfJ5TPpd1HQZNUvwV3pY1gBjIGjg0Rb62mnFfcP4Fidhf5Hl2DqdueQ](https://www.facebook.com/columbian/posts/33f718475d94?fbclid=IwAR2rbfJ5TPpd1HQZNUvwV3pY1gBjIGjg0Rb62mnFfcP4Fidhf5Hl2DqdueQ)

➤ **Columbian**

NAACP, LULAC call for Clark County Council Chair Quiring to step down over remarks: Eileen Quiring said she doesn't believe systemic racism exists in Clark County

Published: June 27, 2020, 3:20pm

<https://www.columbian.com/news/2020/jun/27/naACP-lulac-call-for-clark-county-council-chair-quiring-to-step-down-over-remarks/?fbclid=IwAR04Hfr5D2FabdoB-yDclcdcu47yuCygnze-ZwHGv2tcQuRciLUS5P2JdgQ>

➤ **Petition calling for Eileen Quiring to resign gathers 2,500 signatures: Council chair reaffirmed that she doesn't believe there is systemic racism in Clark County**

Published: June 29, 2020, 4:39pm

<https://www.columbian.com/news/2020/jun/29/petition-calling-for-eileen-quiring-to-resign-gathers-2500-signatures/?fbclid=IwAR2sirRSfl8qCAULV41YwEHmE-fqkCQbntsc-cWScINxNjk4xNqC816JM0c>

As of July 1, there are close to 6,000 signatures on the petition.