

Mr. Shelby Rognstad, Mayor, City of Sandpoint
1123 Lake Street
Sandpoint, ID 838674

Dear Mayor Rognstad,

On September 7th at the Sandpoint City Council meeting during the public comment portion of the meeting, after I read my public comment, Tom Bokowy, a member of the Sandpoint Urban Renewal Board spoke. He ignored the rules laid out by you and addressed his comments to the audience, stating, "I'd like to address the audience." He chastised the audience regarding Facebook conversations and made derogatory comments about several local news sources. Then, he turned to me and called me out personally and addressed me individually.

After the meeting Mr. Bokowy approached me and began to argue about things I had no knowledge of, raising his voice and making derogatory comments about groups and individuals that were not in favor of the levy. He persisted in his verbal assault on me and I reached the point of realizing that there would be no rational conversation with this man. He does not know me and was ascribing comments to me that I had not made. As I struggled to end the conversation, he moved closer to me raised his voice and leaned in toward me in a threatening manner. I had no desire to engage this angry man in further conversation and did not appreciate his "powering up" on me. He would not stop, would not respond to my requests to end the conversation and became louder and more aggressive. I began to shake became fearful due to his threatening manner. Fortunately Police Chief Coons noticed what was happening and stepped in between Mr. Bokowy and myself. Now feeling safer, I turned to the chief and engaged him in conversation regarding a recent very pleasant encounter I'd had with one of his officers, hoping Mr. Bokowy would leave. He did not and attempted to continue his angry tirade and I continued to ignore him until he finally left.

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Bokowy's verbal assaults and bullying manner were completely unacceptable. No man should attempt to intimidate a woman in this manner. His actions take on a more serious tone when one considers that Mr. Bokowy is a mayoral appointed member of the Sandpoint Urban Renewal Board.

Mr. Bokowy is under the authority of a code of ethics in accordance with section 1-7-2 of the city code, "*OFFICIAL OR EMPLOYEE: Any person elected or appointed to or employed or retained by any public office or public body in the City, **whether paid or unpaid and whether part-time or full-time.***"

Section 1-7-1 of the city code also states: *The public judges its government by the way public officials and employees conduct themselves in the post to which they have been elected or appointed. **The people have a right to expect that every public official and employee will conduct himself in a manner that will tend to preserve the public confidence in and respect for the government he represents.** Such confidence and respect can best be promoted if every public official and employee, whether paid or unpaid and whether elected or appointed, will uniformly:*

*A. **Treat all citizens with courtesy, impartiality, fairness and equality under the law;** and,*

*B. **Avoid both actual and potential conflicts between their private self-interest and the public interest.***

I am filing a formal complaint , in the manner outlined in section 1-7-5 “Interpretation”, section “B”, which states: “ *Any voter registered to vote within the city limits of the city may raise a question under this chapter by setting forth the facts in writing and delivering them to the mayor. The mayor shall immediately cause copies of said writing to be delivered to each member of the city council and shall cause the matter to be brought before the city council at the next regularly scheduled city council meeting. The city council shall resolve the question through a majority vote of the council hearing the matter at the regular public meeting of the city council at which said question is reported by the mayor, unless the defending public official or employee requests that the matter be continued until the next subsequent regular public meeting of the city council.*”

- A. Mr. Bokowy launched his attack after I made my public statement. It is my belief that this attack was retribution for my comments regarding ethical behavior on the part of the council as regards to promoting yes votes for the levy from the council chamber.
- B. It is my belief that Mr. Bokowy’s attack was retribution because he is married to one of the levy facilities committee members and he has stated his opinions quite forcefully in public forums.
- C. It is a fact that it was inappropriate for Mr. Bokowy to address his comments to me personally and to mock me during the public comment time in his role as a private citizen and it is unethical for Mr. Bokowy to do this when he is a member of a city board.
- D. Mr. Bokowy has a known history of attempting to extract retribution against those he disagrees with (see attachment A) I found his bullying tactics at the council meeting upsetting and threatening. I want to go on record expressing my concern in this matter should he attempt to extract retribution toward me personally or professionally.
- E. My right to attend city council meetings has been infringed upon as I am now fearful of the treatment I may receive from a city appointee.

F. Mr. Bokowy's actions have caused me to have concerns that my business would never receive fair and equitable treatment from the SURA board.

Mr. Bokowys behavior was egregious. He has violated every portion of city code section 1-7-1. As the code states, I can only judge the city government by the way public officials and employees conduct themselves in the post to which they have been elected or appointed. I have a right to expect that every public official and employee will conduct themselves in a manner that will tend to preserve the public confidence in and respect for the government they represent. Mr. Bokowy destroyed my confidence and respect of the SURA board or the city government in general because he did not treat me or other citizens at that meeting with courtesy, impartiality, fairness and equality under the law. Mr. Bokowy did not avoid actual conflicts between his private self-interest and the public interest. One wonders if someone who has such little control of themselves in public is the best choice to represent the city.

In closing, I want to say thank you to those council members who have exhibited integrity by disclosing potential conflicts of interest and even recusing themselves from voting. When I've found myself on opposite sides of city issues, I've only experienced courtesy and respect from city officials and employees, until last night. When a woman experiences public bullying by a man it is terrifying. When a woman or man experiences public bullying by any person elected or appointed to or employed or retained by any public office or public body in the City, whether paid or unpaid and whether part-time or full-time it is an egregious violation of the code of ethics.

Thank you and I look forward to your response.

Regards,

Anita Aurit
403 Louis Lane
Sandpoint, Idaho 83864 (208.610.0626)
AnitaAurit@gmail.com

Cc: Scot Campbell, City Attorney
B. Fahling Law
File