

Comments to COBI Ethics Board
RE: McBryan Complaint
November 14, 2018
Ron Peltier, COBI City Council Member

RESPONSE TO BONNIE MCBRYAN ETHICS COMPLAINT

There's a lot going on in Bonnie McBryan's October 1st ethics complaint against me. I'm going to keep my comments regarding her complaint fairly short and to the point.

Did Bonnie intentionally misrepresent the truth in comments at the 8/14/18 city council meeting?

When Bonnie got up to speak at the beginning our 8/14 council meeting she read from a prepared statement on a piece of paper. She started out by complimenting our departing city manager, Doug Schulze, and lamenting his imminent departure. She then took a quote from Doug's newspaper interview, where he describes me as difficult and a "bully":

"Like many others though I'm pretty concerned that Doug's resignation came at least in part because of a councilmember behaving as a bully. I don't want to be mean-spirited here, but it seems that somebody from the public needs to stand up and address this issue.

There are a lot of adjectives, a lot of different adjectives that have been applied to Ron's comments and behavior here, in city council, in his written responses to members of the community at public hearings, etc. But now the call has been made about bullying tactics. It's up to you as our elected officials to really dig into this allegation. You need to look at public opinion. You need to look at social media and the stories, the anecdotes that people are posting there. You need to read his messages both to his followers and to those with whom he disagrees. You need to—"

After being temporarily interrupted by Mayor Medina, Bonnie continues with one last statement about me:

"A few months ago Mr. Peltier announced at a council meeting that he has instructed city advisory committees to tighten the review process for building approvals. That means that the committee he works with has added conditions to our building and to others. For example Bay Hay & Feed has just been told that they cannot put brick on the exterior of their building. They have to follow the directions of this committee and use wood."

That last statement by Bonnie went beyond name-calling and innuendo: it was a blatant misrepresentation of the truth intended to impugn my character. In her complaint, though, Bonnie has cited comments I made in an email and at a council meeting in an attempt to prove that she was correct. On February 14th I wrote in an email:

“The DRB Chair believes we can address design guideline issues with those SPR and CUPs in the pipeline with a heightened sense of importance in how they are reviewed and permitted.”

On February 15th I made the following comment at a city council meeting during a discussion on the building moratorium. It was mainly in response to the heart rending pleadings of Bonnie as to how the moratorium was putting her life savings in jeopardy and making it impossible for her to sleep at night. Because two of my colleagues were swayed by Bonnie’s sad tale, it had become politically necessary to provide a loophole that addressed Bonnie’s situation in order to prevent the moratorium from being gutted. Here I am commenting on how to possibly create that loophole:

“I spoke to somebody on — actually the Chair of the Design Review Board. He suggested a path forward, that we allow all major site plans and conditional uses that have already initiated the process to continue through the process.”

When asked by a colleague how this might effect the role of the DRB I answered:

“Their role wouldn’t change. There might be some heightened scrutiny as projects go through the Design Review Board.”

When you look at those statements do you see evidence that I “*instructed city advisory committees to tighten the review process for building approvals*”? To be clear, that is something I couldn’t do, even if I wanted. If you have any doubts about the facts as they relate to Bonnie’s claim you can ask members of the Design Review Board or City Council.

More misrepresentation of the truth in her complaint to the Ethics Board

On page 5 of Bonnie’s complaint she attempts to retroactively edit what she said on 8/14:

“Mr. Peltier claims that I accused him, personally, of strapping our project with conditions. However, *I was specific* in saying that:

“The committee he works with has added conditions to our property.” **Exhibit 6.**

Well, that is not exactly what Bonnie said. She has left out the first three words of the sentence as spoken at the 8/14 meeting (“*That means that..*”): three words that connect that sentence with the one before to convey a clear meaning. Here is the correct version of the sentence cited above by Bonnie, with the three words added (you can confirm this is the correct version by looking at Exhibit 6 in Bonnie’s complaint):

“That means that the committee he works with has added conditions to our building and to others.”

It’s an extension of the sentence that came before it. Here they are together:

“A few months ago Mr. Peltier announced at a council meeting that he has instructed city advisory committees to tighten the review process for building approvals. That means that the committee he works with has added conditions to our building and to others.”

The intended meaning of what Bonnie actually said is pretty clear: that I instructed city committees to tighten the review process for development and that resulted in additional conditions being added to hers and others projects. That is just not true, and by the fact that Bonnie has attempted to misrepresent what she actually said, I think she knows it's not true.

A pattern of not telling the truth

Not only did Bonnie blatantly misrepresent the truth during her comments at the 8/14 city council meeting: she has gone to further misrepresent the truth in her ethics complaint by misrepresenting what she actually said. There's a clear pattern here, and it's not one that reflects a deep commitment to telling the truth.

Was my response to Bonnie in keeping with our ethics code?

I believe I had a right to defend myself against what I perceived to be a personal attack in which Bonnie used name-calling, innuendo, and misrepresentations of the truth to impugn my character. However, I do believe I could have been more restrained and measured in how I responded.