



Missouri Ethics Commission

Elizabeth L. Ziegler
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Final Action: MEC No. 20-0024-I, City of University City, Gregory Rose, Jeff Hales, Aleta Klein, Bwayne Smotherson

Date: 05/26/2022

The Missouri Ethics Commission took final consideration of the complaint filed against City of University City, Gregory Rose, Jeff Hales, Aleta Klein, and Bwayne Smotherson at its May 26, 2022 meeting.

The complaint filed with the Commission alleged that the city officials participated in the production of the city's newsletter, "ROARS" which invited readers to learn more about "Prop F" on the city's website. Proposition F was a local ballot measure on the April 5, 2022, ballot which proposes a quarter cent sales tax to provide additional funding for University City Fire and Emergency Operations. The complaint filed against these incumbent candidates alleged that the advertisement advocated support for the ballot issue, requiring the filing of a non-committee expenditure report, and lacked a "paid for by" disclosure.

The investigation found that while the newsletter displayed graphics that included the "checkmark" symbol, the newsletter did not indicate whether that checkmark was to support or oppose the ballot measure, only that Proposition F would "maintain U City Fire and Emergency Services." Further the chief administrative officer of University City is responsible for the administration of all city affairs, including with respect to the "ROARS" newsletter, and University City's Mayor and council members do not participate in the approval, provide input, or participate in designing the content of the "ROARS" newsletter. Finally, while the newsletter contained language and graphics directing the reader to the website for more information on Proposition F and the date of the election, there was not sufficient evidence of the requirement of a "paid for by" disclosure as this was in a regularly published newsletter and provided no specific information about the Proposition other than its title.

From the facts presented, the Commission found no reasonable grounds exist to support a violation of Chapters 115 and 130, RSMo, and dismissed the complaint.

Elizabeth L. Ziegler
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