



Missouri Ethics Commission

Elizabeth L. Ziegler
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Final Action: MEC No. 22-0035-I, Mehlville Fire District Board of Directors, Aaron Hilmer, Bonnie Stegman, Edmond Ryan

Date: 6/16/22

The Missouri Ethics Commission took final consideration of the complaint filed against Mehlville Fire District Board of Directors, Aaron Hilmer, Bonnie Stegman, Edmond Ryan at its June 16, 2022, meeting.

The complaint filed with the Commission alleged Respondents violated ethics laws when the district printed and mailed flyers related to Proposition 1, on the April 2, 2022, election. Proposition 1 proposed to increase the property tax levy by 20 cents per \$100 assessed valuation to help cover district operations and capital improvements. The mailer stated that the Board of Directors “made the decision to ask residents to approve” the increase and provided information related to the district’s use of revenues.

The investigation provided information that the district outsourced the printing and mailing of the flyer at a total cost of \$21,460.00 from the district’s general fund, which includes revenues from the tax levy, EMS billing, fees for services, investment income, rental income, and various contracts. The district contacted the Board of Elections to determine who voted in the April 2021 election and sent the mailer three times to approximately 9,300 homes in the district.

While the flyer provided information regarding the Proposition which did not constitute direct advocacy, the fact that the district provided the information to specific district residents multiple times rather than providing the information to more residents was also considered and raised the question of whether this action contributed to advocacy.

In this instance, the Commission found no reasonable grounds exist to support a violation of Chapter 115, RSMo, and dismissed the complaint. However, in the future, political subdivisions should consider whether targeting such information raises the issue of advocating when public funds are used.

Elizabeth L. Ziegler
Executive Director