

Neighbors West Northwest
2257 NW Raleigh St.
Portland, Oregon 97210

September 29, 2021

Northwest Examiner
2825 NW Upshur St., Ste. C
Portland, OR 97210

Mr. Classen,

On behalf of the Neighbors West Northwest (NWNW) Board of Directors, I am writing to correct your September 2021 article, "Vision quest cloaks personal attack."

Your assertion that NWNW staff have "taken charge of the neighborhood coalition program, initiating a broad social equity mission fashioned upon City Hall's lead" is simply untrue.

Since our Board retreat in January 2020, we have repeatedly directed NWNW staff to help our neighborhood associations more effectively diversify and expand their membership and outreach to less represented communities by developing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programming. NWNW staff responded by developing excellent formal and informal DEI training and programs for our neighborhoods and the community. The public are welcome to join our workshops, lectures and roundtable conversations, which can be found under the Building Diverse Communities link on our nwnw.org web site.

The NWNW Board discussed and approved the social justice statement on our web site.

Mr. Pinger was present at the June 10, 2020 NWNW Directors meeting and participated in unanimous board votes to approve both the social justice statement and our FY 2020-21 budget which allocated \$4000 for NWNW Staff to develop and implement DEI training. This is clearly documented in attached meeting minutes and documents. Our meeting minutes are available to the public and are attached for the NW Examiner to review.

We hope you will direct any future criticism of our coalition's effort to reach out to and engage underrepresented communities to the responsible party – the NWNW Board of Directors who requested it. Blaming staff for following the Boards' directions disrespects both the Board and staff. Naming and publishing a photo of our most junior staff member and calling out their minority status is particularly inappropriate and hurtful. The named employee was not even employed by NWNW until September of 2020.

Regarding your speculations concerning a staff complaint against a board member's behavior, NWNW policy and common decency require that personnel issues be kept confidential and disclosed only as necessary to investigate and act on the information. For you to "presume" the

name of a complainant or the nature of the complaint is irresponsible and harmful, misleading, and likely to discourage future employee complaints.

An attorney specializing in employment law has been hired to advise us throughout the complaint process. We are also hiring an independent investigator to look into the formal staff complaint against Mr. Pinger. The investigator will review the evidence and interview all the parties concerned in order to ensure this matter is handled respectfully and fairly.

Our Board regrets that you have chosen to ignore the other work that our organization has done on wildfire preparedness, homelessness, clean-up programs, election candidate panels and other topics. We appreciate our staff and the work they do to make our community a better place for all.

Your readers and our neighborhoods deserve fact-based journalism, not speculation and discrimination against minorities.

Sincerely,



Richard Barker
President, Neighbors West Northwest Board of Directors

ATTACHMENTS

Highlighting has been added for relevant elements.

Examples of NWNW Board Directing Staff to Implement DEI programming:

Minutes of the February 12, 2020 NWNW Board meeting note discussion about the January 2020 NWNW Board retreat. The minutes for this section say "Future work includes: ... Diversity and inclusion training as priority." Mr. Pinger was not present.

Minutes of the June 10, 2020 NWNW Board meeting where the board added \$4000 to the FY 2020-21 budget for DEI training and support. The budget, with the addition, was unanimously approved. Mr. Pinger was present and voted.

2020-2021 Civic Life Grant Agreement Appendix with Scope of Work, including the budget approved at our June 10, 2020 meeting with minor budget changes. Elements relating to DEI are highlighted. This Agreement was delayed well beyond the end of the fiscal year because Civic Life was in turmoil and dealing with Covid. The board was not able to vote to approve the Agreement due to the limited window available for signature, but the Agreement included our approved budget with minor changes and it was approved by Brian Harvey, the Board President. The signed agreement and modified budget were discussed at our August 12, 2020 meeting.

Minutes of the August 12, 2020 NWNW Board meeting. The Board voted unanimously to approve the adjustments to the budget in the Civic Life Grant Agreement. Mr. Pinger was not present.

2021-22 FY Grant Civic Life Grant Agreement with Scope of Work (signed PDF), including NWNW Budget. See DEI related items highlighted on pages 12-15. This Agreement was approved unanimously by the NWNW Board on May 12, 2021. Mr. Pinger was present and voted.

Minutes of the May 12, 2021 NWNW Board meeting. The Board voted unanimously to approve the 2021-22 Civic Life Grant Agreement. Mr. Pinger was present. Further unrelated budget adjustments were approved at our June meeting.

NWNW Board Votes approving statement on social justice:

Minutes of the June 10, 2020 NWNW Board meeting where the board edited and unanimously approved a social justice statement. Mr. Pinger was present and voted.