

April 26, 2022

Public Disclosure Commission
PO Box 40908
Olympia, Washington 98504-0908

Re: April 28, 2022 Agenda Item Concerning a Reporting Modification Request from Kim Plese,
Candidate for Spokane County Commissioner

Members of the Public Disclosure Commission,

I am **writing today in opposition** to the Reporting Modification Request from **Kim Plese, candidate for Spokane County Commissioner**.

The request from the candidate, as submitted, is overly broad and does not serve the public interest of transparency as embodied by the approval by voters of Initiative 276 in 1972.

Specifically, the candidate's submitted request prevents voters and the media from learning of business relationships of Plese Printing & Marketing ("Plese Printing") which have the potential of causing a direct conflict of interest between the candidate's sources of business revenue and a key employee hired by the Spokane County Commissioners in August 2021 (as reported by *The Spokesman-Review* newspaper in October 2021).

Further, Plese Printing indicates that confidentiality agreements have been entered into with new and existing customers, yet the company's website (<https://pleseprint.com>) highlights eighteen existing customers of the business entity and features an additional five testimonials (including three customers not included in the 18-customer count). It is contradictory for the candidate's business entity to disclose the names of its customers to the public for marketing purposes yet conceal the existence of its higher-end customers (\$12,000 or more in revenue for a 12-month period) for purposes of the candidate's filings with this body, thus denying transparency and sunshine to the general public.

Plese Printing has provided printing and other related services to the Cathy McMorris Rodgers campaign ("McMorris Rodgers"), a federal political campaign regulated by the Federal Elections Commission, since April 2009. Since the inception of the business relationship in 2009, McMorris Rodgers has paid in excess of \$360,000 for printing and related services to Plese Printing, most recently as follows (all information is from FEC filings at <https://www.fec.gov>) and is summarized in Exhibit A, incorporated by reference):

- Calendar year 2021: \$28, 329
- Calendar year 2022 to date (through March 31, 2022): \$14,525
- **The 12-month period immediately preceding the candidate's C-1 filing date: \$28,367**

In October 2021, an article was published in *The Spokesman-Review* headlined "Spokane County hired Cathy McMorris Rodgers' brother in August as a policy adviser". The article indicates that Mr. McMorris was hired as the county's first community engagement and public policy adviser in August 2021. In the article, Commissioner Al French was quoted as saying "there were no other applicants for McMorris'

position and that the county never published the position on hiring or recruiting websites.” The article is Exhibit B and is incorporated by reference.

Granting the candidate’s Reporting Modification Request prevents the public and the news media from better understanding the extent of the candidate’s business relationship with McMorris Rodgers and the role of a county commissioner working with a senior policy adviser for Spokane County (who happens to be the brother of Cathy McMorris Rodgers).

In the Reporting Modification Request the candidate also indicates that confidentiality agreements for new customers and agreements for existing customers, in part, prevent the disclosure of business and governmental customers that paid \$12,000 or more during the previous 12 months to Plese Printing.

The Public Disclosure Commission should be aware that Plese Printing’s website discloses the names of eighteen (18) customers for marketing purposes and also has testimonials from five customers (three of which are not part of the group of 18 customers used for marketing purposes). Exhibits C (customers) & D (testimonials) are incorporated by reference.

It is contrary to the intent of the public’s interest in transparency and sunshine in campaign finance matters to permit a candidate’s business entity to use its customers’ names for purposes of marketing but to permit that candidate’s business entity to conceal the identity of its higher-end customers (those paying the business \$12,000 or more in the 12 months preceding the candidate’s C-1 filing with the PDC) in the candidate’s F-1 filings with the Commission.

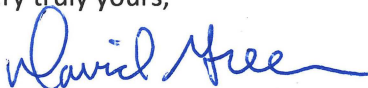
As a former candidate for public office in Spokane County, (running for county treasurer in 2018 and county commissioner in 2020), I am familiar with the responsibilities of candidates to disclose financial information with the Commission and the public.

And while I applied for (and received in a 3-1-1 (one abstention) vote) a reporting modification request in 2020 (to prevent the disclosure of a dental practice’s name in a manner which was contrary to the Internal Revenue Code’s requirements for tax practitioners to maintain client confidentiality), that dental practice had no business connections to Spokane County and none of its owners had relatives working in senior policy positions with Spokane County.

In summary, the Reporting Modification Request from candidate Plese is too broad and does not serve the public interest in providing transparency about her business entity’s customers.

I respectfully request that the members of the Commission vote to deny the applicant’s request.

Very truly yours,



David Green
2123 E Overbluff Rd
Spokane, WA 99203

committee_name	report_year	report_typ	recipient_name	recipient_s	disbursement	disbursement_dz	disbursement_amount	disbursement_amount
C00390476 CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS FOR	2021	Q1	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	1/4/2021 0:00	8696.41	8696.41
C00390476 CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS FOR	2021	Q1	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	2/1/2021 0:00	3665.65	3665.65
C00390476 CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS FOR	2021	Q1	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	3/1/2021 0:00	451.82	451.82
C00390476 CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS FOR	2021	Q2	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	4/1/2021 0:00	971.9	971.9
C00390476 CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS FOR	2021	Q2	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	5/3/2021 0:00	2736.45	2736.45
C00390476 CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS FOR	2021	Q3	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	7/1/2021 0:00	1730.4	1730.4
C00390476 CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS FOR	2021	Q3	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	8/2/2021 0:00	6811.32	6811.32
C00390476 CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS FOR	2021	YE	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	10/1/2021 0:00	1235.61	1235.61
C00390476 CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS FOR	2021	YE	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	11/1/2021 0:00	1245.36	1245.36
C00390476 CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS FOR	2021	YE	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	12/1/2021 0:00	784.69	784.69
<i>Manually added (see note)</i>	2022	Q1	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	1/3/22	11308.16	11308.16
<i>Manually added (see note)</i>	2022	Q1	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	2/1/22	1091.62	1091.62
<i>Manually added (see note)</i>	2022	Q1	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING	WA	PRINTING	3/1/22	2125.33	2125.33

Sum of 2021 Payments **28,329.61**
Sum of 2022 YTD Payments **14,525.11**

Sum of Payments Covered by Candidate F-1 Filing Period (12 mos) 28,367.33

This spreadsheet was sorted by date for ease of presentation.
Some columns have been hidden for presentation purposes.
The .csv file has been submitted for review purposes.

Data Source: FEC.gov

ORG	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING			4201 E TRENT AVENU SPOKANE WA	99202		20220103	11308.16
ORG	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING			4201 E TRENT AVENU SPOKANE WA	99202		20220201	1091.62
ORG	PLEASE PRINTING & MARKETING			4201 E TRENT AVENU SPOKANE WA	99202		20220301	2125.33

The picture of the January-March 2022 expenditures was "snipped" from the FEC.gov .csv file for the 2022 Q1 filing period as it is not yet summarized at FEC.gov.

The full .csv file for this time period has been submitted for review purposes.
The above three lines may be found in the .csv file at lines 3065 through 3067.

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Washington Idaho

NEWS > LOCAL GOVERNMENT


Spokane County hired Cathy McMorris Rodgers' brother in August as a policy adviser

UPDATED: Sun., Oct. 17, 2021



McMorris

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By Colin Tiernan 
colint@spokesman.com
(509) 459-5039

Spokane County has hired Jeff McMorris, brother of Spokane Republican U.S. Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, as its first community engagement and public policy adviser.

McMorris spent part of his childhood in Eastern Washington. In 1984, when McMorris was 12, his family moved to Kettle Falls, in Stevens County. He has a bachelor's degree in business from Pensacola Christian College in Florida and a master's degree in international business from Pepperdine University.

Most recently, McMorris worked for more than three years in President Donald Trump's administration as the northwest regional administrator for the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Before his time at HUD, McMorris spent nearly 13 years working for King County Councilwoman Kathy Lambert, a former Republican state legislator.

McMorris, who started working for the county Aug. 16, will have several responsibilities.

For the community engagement part of his job he'll be interacting with the public on behalf of the county CEO and county commissioners.

He'll also analyze the county's policy options and provide high-level advice to the commissioners and CEO.

McMorris also has a third responsibility, and it'll be taking up a lot of his time and energy right now. He's in charge of handling the county's \$101 million allotment of American Rescue Plan dollars and figuring how the money's needed most. The American Rescue Plan is a \$1.9 trillion stimulus bill Congress passed to help the U.S. recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Congress is placing a host of restrictions on how local governments can spend their American Rescue Plan money, so McMorris will have to make sure that the way the county doles out the dollars is legal. The county has to adopt a plan for its \$101 million by the end of 2024 and spend the dollars by the end of 2026.

McMorris said that, between his 12 years advising councilwoman Lambert and his three-and-a-half years at HUD, he feels well prepared for his new job.

“It’s a natural fit for my background,” he said.

Spokane County has never had a permanent community engagement and public policy adviser position before, but all three county commissioners said McMorris’ job is not a new position.

County commissioners Josh Kerns, Al French and Mary Kuney all said the job was created for Cindy Wendle.

Wendle was never a permanent county employee. She was paid as a contractor and tasked with helping the county distribute federal pandemic relief through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act. The CARES Act is a \$2.2 trillion bill Congress passed in March 2020.

“The position was already there and funded through the contract that was there for Cindy,” Kerns said. “The position existed about a year before Jeff even came on board.”

Kerns said that even though Wendle’s initial job was specifically to distribute CARES Act funds, over time she was giving the commissioners more and more public policy advice and doing more community engagement on the commissioners’ behalf.

Wendle’s job was “morphing into more policy as CARES was winding down,” and her position “kept having more and more duties assigned to it,” Kerns said.

“The job description was evolving because we were turning her position into a permanent, full-time position,” French said.

In June, Wendle accepted a job as president of the United Soccer League to Spokane.

“If it wasn’t for USL soccer, Cindy Wendle would be in this position today,” Kerns said.

[The county’s job description](#) for the community engagement and public policy adviser role was established on July 22 and revised on July 26. McMorris said he was offered the job in early August.

Kerns and French repeatedly said McMorris’ job is “not a new position.”

French has stated otherwise. On Sept. 20, the county posted a video of a conversation between French and McMorris on its YouTube page.

“This is a new position at the county,” French [said in the video](#).

French said there were no other applicants for McMorris’ position and that the county never published the position on hiring or recruiting websites.

“We don’t have to advertise every job,” French said. “We can do direct hires. We do that all the time.”

It’s unclear who ultimately made the decision to hire McMorris. Kerns said it was Spokane County CEO Scott Simmons’ decision. Kerns declined to say whether the commissioners made the final call, nor would he say whether the commissioners voted to allow Simmons to hire McMorris.

French also declined to say who ultimately made the decision to hire McMorris. He said the county CEO makes hiring and firing decisions. McMorris reports directly to Simmons.

The decision to hire McMorris was made in executive session, French said. He said he wouldn’t share information about discussions held in that executive session.

“I think I can say that the decision to move forward with Jeff was unanimously supported by all four of us,” French said, referring to the three commissioners and Simmons.

Simmons could not be reached for comment in time for this story.

According to the job description on the county website, the community engagement and public policy adviser position comes with a salary in the \$78,000 to \$108,000 range.

Kerns and French said they didn’t know McMorris’ exact salary off the tops of their heads, but they believed he is starting out in the \$90,000 range. The county said The Spokesman-Review would need to file a public records request to get McMorris’ precise salary.

The county commissioners all said McMorris’ hiring had nothing to do with his being Cathy McMorris Rodgers’ brother.

Kerns said McMorris has impressed him in his first two months at the county and brings “a heck of a lot of experience.”

“He’s an asset to the county, regardless of who his family is,” Kerns said. “His last name could be Smith or Jones; he does a great job for the county.”

French said McMorris’ relationship with McMorris Rodgers did not influence the decision to hire him.

“What does that matter?” French said. “Should somebody be disqualified because they happen to be related to someone else? Seriously? Is that the criteria we should use before we hire and fire somebody?”

Kuney said she’s excited to have McMorris on board. He’s a great person, smart and qualified, she said. She also emphasized that his past experience makes him a major asset as the county works to distribute American Rescue Plan dollars.

“I know the elephant in the room is that he’s Cathy’s brother,” Kuney said. “That has absolutely nothing to do with it.”

McMorris said it isn’t fair for people to question his hiring.

“I don’t trade on my name,” he said. “My résumé I think stands for itself, and I’m very qualified for this position.”

McMorris reiterated that his experience working in King County and at HUD makes him a perfect fit for his role at the county.

“I don’t for a minute believe I was offered this job because my sister is a member of Congress,” he said. “I’m a unique individual and I think if my résumé wasn’t as strong as it was, then yes, people would have a reason to say, ‘Oh, this is political favoritism.’ I honestly believe that has nothing to do with this.”

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Contact Us

Downtown Spokane

999 W Riverside Ave

Spokane, Wa 99201

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 2160
Spokane, WA 99210

Customer service:

[\(509\) 747-4422](tel:(509)747-4422)

Newsroom:

[\(509\) 459-5400](tel:(509)459-5400)

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18 Customers are Featured on the Plese
Printing Website

Our Clients

Our Clients

Our Clients



97%

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

97%

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

97%

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION



Our Clients



Our Clients



Our Clients



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CUSTOMER SATISFACTION



5 Testimonials (including three from customers not on the featured customer list) are shown on the Plese Printing Website



Plese Printing has been an integral part of Cancer Care Northwest's day-to-day operations, consistently providing quality, professional print materials. The staff is always accommodating, knowledgeable and proficient. I would strongly recommend Kim Plese and her team for your printing and marketing needs!

KRISTEN LYBBERT
Cancer Care Northwest



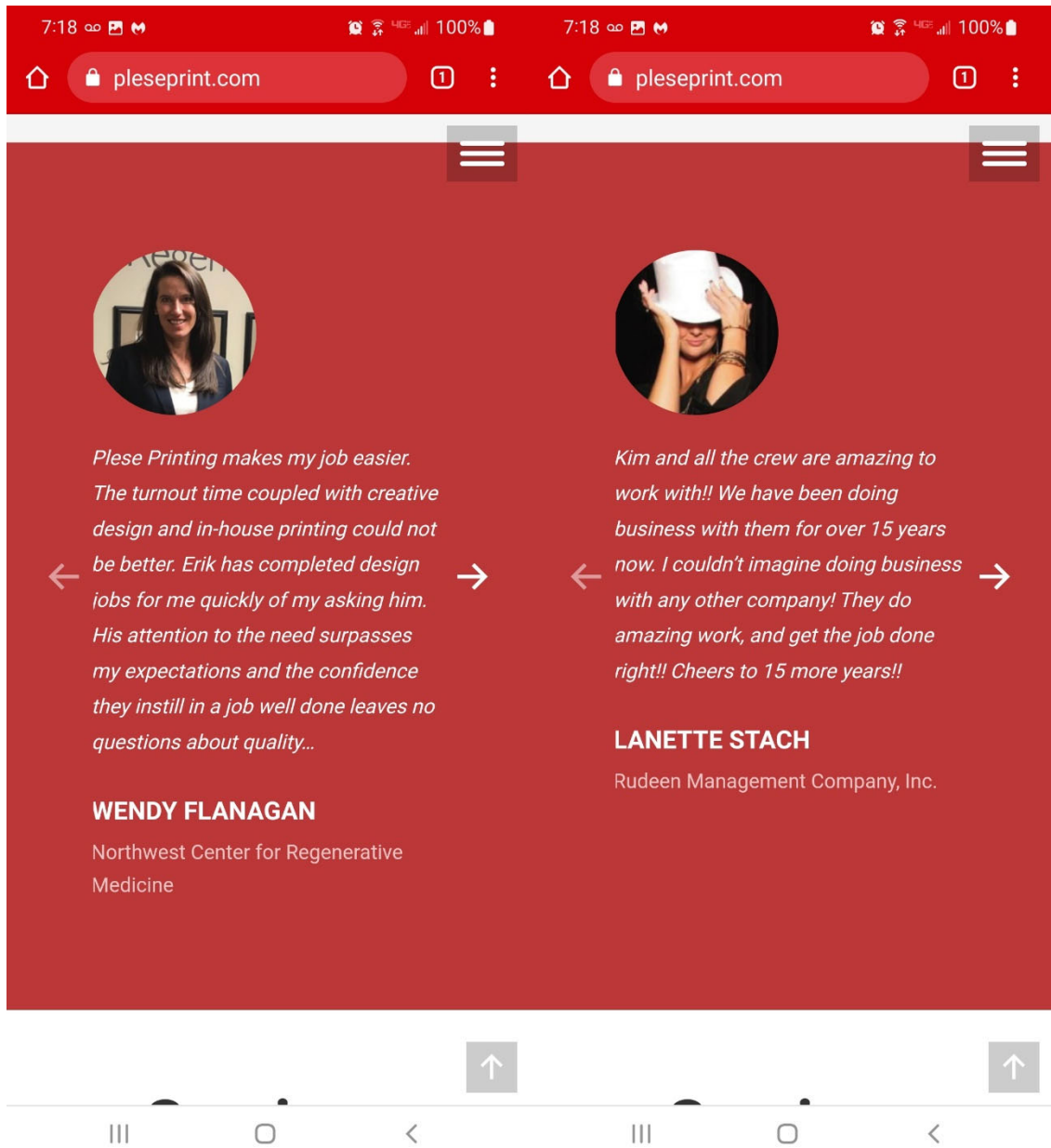
The Staff at Plese Printing have always done a fantastic job for our companies. We have used them for everything from menu boards to mailers and couldn't be happier with the results. I highly recommend them for all of your printing and marketing needs!

PHIL COSTELLO
Business Owner – Zips



I owe you the MOON for such professional and amazing pictures, website, invites, etc. PLESE PRINTING ROCKS!!!!

TRACY J. FITZGERALD
Volunteer | Retain Tim Fitzgerald 2018



Plese Printing makes my job easier. The turnout time coupled with creative design and in-house printing could not be better. Erik has completed design jobs for me quickly of my asking him. His attention to the need surpasses my expectations and the confidence they instill in a job well done leaves no questions about quality..

WENDY FLANAGAN
Northwest Center for Regenerative
Medicine



Kim and all the crew are amazing to work with!! We have been doing business with them for over 15 years now. I couldn't imagine doing business with any other company! They do amazing work, and get the job done right!! Cheers to 15 more years!!

LANETTE STACH
Rudeen Management Company, Inc.