



J.D. Raymond
Sheriff

OFFICE OF THE FRANKLIN COUNTY
SHERIFF

1016 N. 4th Ave D-201
Pasco, WA 99301
509-545-3501

April 10, 2024

Prosecutor Shawn Sant
1016 N. 4th Ave
Pasco-Franklin County WA
99301

Franklin County is in a state of dysfunction. This dysfunction is currently driven by a board of county commissioners who have little experience running a multi-million-dollar operation. This is evidenced by the large financial deficit we are currently in and have been in for many years, while cities and counties around us are flourishing and growing.

Many people have come along over the years asking the board to professionalize and serve the entire citizenry of our diverse population. Unfortunately, it has become apparent that the majority of the board members are serving for self-centered purposes or for their direct neighbors (political supporters).

We are a county with no operational guidelines (policies) that direct the day-to-day operations and mission of Franklin County government, no discernible objectives, and routinely making decisions on a whim or behind closed doors, which has at times clearly violated open public meetings laws. To compound the problem, we often have single commissioners acting unilaterally without considering the desires of the other two commissioners and running roughshod over other elected officials. This is causing conflicting directions, in-fighting, and dysfunction.

We are a county that in the short span of a decade has had three county administrators, which has included one that was run off and now a second that appears to be in the process of being run off because he does not bow to the desires of individual commissioners. A new county administrator with experience in orderly government who is attempting to right our county with sound policy and procedures should be congratulated, not fearful of losing his job. It is plain to see after reviewing the publicly accessible recording of the April 3, 2024 board meeting what's in store for our current administrator. It is also worth noting that this current administrator clearly qualifies for what the law considers a whistleblower, and the Franklin County Commissioners should be well aware of this status by now.

One does not have to go far on the State Auditor's website to research the approximately fifteen recent financial findings against our county. One would also note that the Board of County Commissioners over the years have failed to protect the taxpayers and guard against thefts and misuses of public funds. When people try to work towards solutions, officials dig in and begin to throw stones in order to cover up their own misdeeds instead of acknowledging that the failure of leadership has caused our financial issues.

The legislative branch of Franklin County flat out refuses to create modern policies and procedures that have been the proven method of safeguarding taxpayer dollars and safeguarding our county's future. We are a county that refuses to come into the 21st century, right wrongs, and develop into efficient, properly functioning government. It is becoming painfully obvious that this is intentional. Members of our legislative branch actually prefer to be able to manipulate decisions behind closed doors and not be held accountable to publicly available written policies so they cannot be held to account for their decisions. This is not only dysfunction, it is corruption.

On April 3, 2024, I observed yet another round of open public meeting violations by repeatedly changing and manipulating the published agenda for the board meeting before scrapping it altogether at the beginning of the meeting. There were several "agendas" published, yet the actual agenda they used in the meeting was never made available to the public. Attached is a copy of the meeting in its entirety for your review. In summation, you will get to see the actions of gutting a public agenda, resending earlier resolutions with no public notice, and the lack of legal representation to keep the wayward commissioners on track. What was on the publicly available version of the agenda was an item regarding .09 funds that had a direct impact on the City of Pasco, City of Connell, and Port of Pasco. Because of this, multiple executive officers of those municipalities were present, with the Connell officials traveling 40 miles to attend. The same commissioners that get to decide what is put on the agenda took a unanimous vote to table that agenda item with no opportunity for discussion. This wasted the valuable time of at least ten public officials, wasted taxpayer resources, and caused embarrassment to our county. This is dysfunction.

As another troubling example of dysfunction and outright illegal activity, the topic of a surplus auction was brought up in this meeting. As a bit of background, the county has taken the initial steps of declaring a large lot of equipment at the Hapo Center as surplus and excess to the needs of the county. During the conversation regarding the logistics of a public auction, Commissioner Didier made it publicly known that he wanted some of that equipment to be gifted to an organization of his personal choice based on his assessment that they are deserving of this equipment. As a note, this is the second time Didier asked that this equipment be given to the organization of his choice. The county cannot gift public resources worth thousands of dollars to an organization that a singular commissioner wants. Making that type of statement is inducement to commit an illegal act. I am legitimately worried that based on how Commissioner Didier rules by fear in the courthouse, employees will feel like they have to commit this illegal act because Didier has now made his intentions known in two separate commissioner meetings.

A public official causing publicly owned equipment to be gifted to his personal associates is dysfunction and its corruption. What is truly disturbing is that neither of his fellow commissioners have made a clear and public statement that what he is asking for is illegal and that staff should not follow his orders. Several comments were made in the audience that what Didier was asking for was illegal but yet none of his colleagues challenged it. Dysfunction? Corruption?

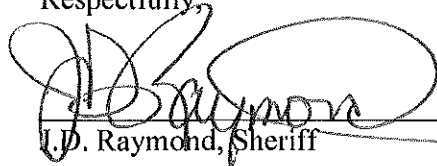
Towards the end of this same meeting came the announcement of an executive session under RCW 42.30.110(1)(g) -Evaluate the qualifications of an applicant...or to review the performance of a public employee. Everyone was cleared from the room except the three commissioners, which is highly unusual. At the conclusion of the executive session, it was announced by the chair that no decisions had been made. However, the county administrator will be getting a performance evaluation at the next scheduled board meeting.

This decision was made without a public vote, as neither of the other two commissioners agreed to this performance evaluation in the public meeting. Was this an unlawful vote taken in an executive session, or was it unlawful unilateral action without board consent or approval? Who gets to decide when the county administrator gets a performance evaluation, and who creates this evaluation to make sure it is legally sound, objective, and risk-averse? Labor matters in Washington are incredibly

nuanced, as you know. Even the timing, threat of, or motives of a performance evaluation can trigger a cause of action, and that doesn't even take into account the content of such an evaluation.

Mr. Sant, it really all boils down to this: You are uniquely situated in a position to cause immense impact for the betterment of Franklin County. You can also choose to do nothing and simply "defend" the county as the numerous instances of corruption and dysfunction bear fruit and create claims and losses for the citizens of Franklin County. I humbly believe that your position as elected prosecutor places you under an obligation to prevent misdeeds as a means to protect and defend the county's assets. I will continue to shine a light on government corruption as I believe that is my obligation as an elected public servant. I sincerely hope that you will do your part as well so that Franklin County can free itself of this albatross of dysfunction and we can collectively get back to serving the people that trust us with THEIR government.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.D. Raymond", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

J.D. Raymond, Sheriff

Cc: Washington State Auditor
Washington State Attorney General
County Administrator Mike Gonzalez