



Joseph Mehline
Chief of Police

Toppenish Police Department

516 West 2nd Ave
Toppenish, WA 98948
Tel (509) 865-4355
Fax (509) 865-5054
Cityoftoppenish.us/police/

Date: December 19th, 2024

To: Chief Martin Pilcher, Richland Police Department

From: Joseph Mehline, Chief of Police

Subject: Request for Independent Investigation

I am requesting assistance from the Richland Police Department in conducting an independent investigation regarding a citizen complaint filed by Monte Heggie. The complaint, submitted via email to the City of Toppenish, raises concerns about the residency of current Toppenish City Council Member Ezequil Morfin. Specifically, the complaint alleges that Council Member Morfin may not reside within the city limits of Toppenish, potentially violating **RCW 35A.12.030**:

Eligibility to hold elective office: No person shall be eligible to hold elective office under the mayor-council plan unless the person is a registered voter of the city at the time of filing his or her declaration of candidacy and has been a resident of the city for a period of at least one year next preceding his or her election. Residence and voting within the limits of any territory which has been included in, annexed to, or consolidated with such city is construed to have been residence within the city. A mayor or councilmember shall hold within the city government no other public office or employment except as permitted under the provisions of chapter 42.23 RCW.

The complaint was submitted via email to the City Clerk, Heidi Riojas, on **November 25, 2024, at 4:41 PM**. There have been previous discussions regarding Council Member Morfin's residency stemming from a Toppenish police contact earlier this year.

On **May 11, 2024**, the Toppenish Police Department responded to a burglary complaint outside the city limits at **1871 S Olden Way Rd, Toppenish, WA 98948**. During the investigation, Morfin was contacted at the scene. Morfin initially advised Toppenish officers he lived at the location. Later in the conversation, Morfin stated his daughter stayed there, and he was at the location while she was away for the weekend. The Yakima County Sheriff's Office responded to the scene and took over the investigation, which was documented under case# 24C06933. This Olden Way address is currently listed for Morfin in the Toppenish Police Department's internal records management system. Toppenish Police Captain Schwarader notified me of this contact shortly after it occurred.

Morfin's city application lists an address of [REDACTED] RCW 42.56.250(1)(d) which differs from the one mentioned above. I contacted the City of Toppenish Finance Department and requested water billing information from the S. Division address. The information was provided to me, listing Morfin as a renter of the property. The owners of the property are listed as Dino and Veronica Ruiz. The bill included an Indian Health Services Discount, applicable if an enrolled tribal member resides at the location. To be included with this memorandum, the following documents will be provided to the Richland Police Department's assigned investigator for review:

1. The original complaint submitted by Monte Heggie along with contact information.
2. Morfin's signed application for City of Toppenish Council.
3. Toppenish Police AXON video footage from May 11, 2024, police contact with Morfin.
4. Captain's Incident Notification, regarding police contact with Morfin.
5. Water bill for [REDACTED] RCW 42.56.250(1)(d) dated 11/1/2024

The Toppenish Police Department requests the Richland Police Department to independently investigate this matter to ensure impartiality and minimize our department's involvement. We appreciate your assistance and impartial review of this matter. Please let us know if additional documentation or information is required to facilitate your investigation.

Redaction Log

Redaction Reasons by Exemption

Reason	Description	Pages (Count)
		1(1)
RCW 42.56.250(1)(d)	(d) The following information held by any public agency in personnel records, public employment related records, volunteer rosters, or included in any mailing list of employees or volunteers of any public agency: Residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, personal wireless telephone numbers, personal email addresses, social security numbers, driver's license numbers, identicard numbers, payroll deductions including the amount and identification of the deduction, and emergency contact information of employees or volunteers of a public agency, and the names, dates of birth, residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, personal wireless telephone numbers, personal email addresses, social security numbers, and emergency contact information of dependents of employees or volunteers of a public agency. For purposes of this subsection (1)(d), "employees" includes independent provider home care workers as defined in RCW 74.39A.240;	2(2)