

# Mirror's role in vetting candidates

The Mirror published a story last week regarding Federal Way City Council candidate Tony Pagliocco's background.

Following the story's online publication, we received public backlash as the candidate's supporters called the story a "smear campaign" and an attack against Pagliocco.

However, that is not the case.

As we stated in our story, the Mirror conducted a background check on all 19 candidates who applied for the Pos. 2 vacancy.

With background checks, we are limited by what information police and courts can provide to us in a timely manner, whether candidates use their full legal names on their applications and other challenges.

The Mirror requested all of the public records regarding the 19

candidates from the Federal Way Police Department. Since a few of the candidates announced their intention to apply early, we



**CARRIE RODRIGUEZ**  
EDITOR'S NOTE

obtained records from the Federal Way police for those candidates. The police department will fulfill our request for the remaining 16 candidates by March 16.

In addition, we also ran the candidates names through the court

system. We found that Pagliocco was arrested in 2016 for a DUI and physical control of a motor vehicle while under the influence. He also has two decade-old outstanding traffic tickets in Scottsdale, Arizona.

For the other candidates, we have not

discovered any citations that warrant a news story.

In addition to the backlash, readers inquired why we didn't report Pagliocco's information before the general election in November 2019 when he also ran for a council seat.

Great question — let's start from the beginning.

Pagliocco had multiple opportunities to disclose his citations to the Mirror in the seven-month span from his candidate filing in May 2019 to the general election on Nov. 6, 2019. The Mirror interviewed him for a candidate profile in July 2019, and hosted a candidate forum on Oct. 9, 2019. Pagliocco didn't mention his citations at either event.

Finally the week before the November general election the afternoon of Tuesday, Oct. 29 Pagliocco sent an email to Mirror columnist Bob Roegner in response to an inquiry that Roegner had emailed Pagliocco two days prior. The candidate disclosed that he had a physical control charge.

"No, I have never been arrested for DUI," Pagliocco stated in the Oct. 29 email, noting he did receive a physical control citation in 2016.

He continued in the email that he's been open about the citation with "quite a few people on the campaign trail and during my City Commission appointment interviews. The incident was unquestionably unfortunate and embarrassing, but the law is the law and there's no justifying it ..."

Since Oct. 29 was past the Mirror's deadline for the final Friday edition

before the Nov. 6, 2019 election, we did not have enough time to investigate Pagliocco's citation.

When we file a public records request with any agency, per state law those agencies have five business days to respond to our requests. And once they respond, it can take weeks or even months for an agency to fulfill a records request. That would have put us well beyond the general election, when any findings would have been irrelevant for us to report.

In addition, Mirror staff did a background check on all of the council candidates running in the general election in September. We ran Tony Pagliocco's name — the name he used in his campaign material and on the King County Election's website — through the system and did not

find any documents related to his physical control and DUI charges, or his outstanding traffic tickets in Scottsdale, Arizona.

However, following the general election, we learned that Pagliocco's citations were filed under his legal name, Anthony Pagliocco. When we ran his legal name through the system, we found the citations.

In response to the article, Pagliocco also told his supporters that the Mirror's reportage was inaccurate.

"... And it wasn't a DUI - it was Physical Control - they are having a tough time fixing that, but my police report will prove them wrong if I have to go there," he stated on the Mirror's Facebook page.

He reached out to the Mirror and requested us to make corrections, sending us a copy of the Federal Way Police

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# Welcome to Olympia Mr. Johnson

Many pieces of legislation start out as a well-intentioned idea to solve a problem, but there is a reason old-timers compare making laws to making sausage. Sometimes it isn't pretty, and by the time everybody weighs in, that great idea may look completely different.

Such is the case with House Bill 2907, which started out as a regional approach to solving the affordable housing and homeless problem with a tax. The background says a county with at least two million (only King County) in population may impose an annual payroll expense tax of 0.01-0.02% on employers engaging in business in the county, with deductions allowed for any payroll attributable to an employee with annual compensation of less than \$150,000.

Among other deductions are small business, cancer centers and grocery

workers. Prime sponsors are Reps. Nicole Macri, D-Seattle and Larry Springer, D-Kirkland. Former Federal Way City council member, and newly-appointed state Rep. Jesse Johnson, D-Federal



**BOB ROEGNER**  
INSIDE POLITICS

Way, signed on as a sponsor. While on the council, Johnson worked hard to help those in need including the homeless and renters with affordable housing.

The tax could raise \$121 million per year and is supported by

Seattle City Mayor Jenny Durkan, many businesses, labor unions and social service providers. King County has been low-key, but has wanted a county-wide tax for many years. The revenue would be split 43% for Seattle and 57% King County and suburban jurisdictions.

Many county and suburban leaders have urged a

regional solution for years. Some, because they don't want to spend local money, and others because they think a coordinated effort is more likely to succeed. In Federal Way there are about 74-90 businesses that would be affected, but Auburn, Renton and Kent could have more.

Then came the politics. The legislation moved quickly as it had smart supporters and sponsors. Timing was important as in the background was Seattle City Council member Kshama Sawant, who wanted more money, with her "tax Amazon" campaign. Democrats wanted HB 2907 to be first in line. Republicans opposed the bill as a tax on business.

Several cities along with the mayors of Auburn and Federal Way, expressed their concern that they were not consulted in advance for input, although wanting to get ahead of Sawant was likely the reason for Seattle to

move quickly.

The Federal Way Council discussion likely reflected other cities, and was not whether or not the proposal might be a possible solution to the homeless challenge, but that city wanted to preserve the tax option for their own use. Always fearful of appearing to support a tax, and with city elections looming next year, no one suggested that Federal Way could support the legislation and then apply to the county for some of the 57% that would be available to the suburbs, and have some of the new money spent in South King county to help solve local problems.

Johnson found himself at odds with his former colleagues. His support for the tax as a possible solution was sincere, as he had demonstrated while on the council, but another of his goals was to "start the discussion" on solving homelessness. That goal was achieved. But as he found there were many

others who had their own view of the tax.

Auburn and Federal Way also worried that some businesses might move a few miles south into Pierce County where the tax would not be in effect.

Since the Legislature only has a few weeks left, supporters of the bill have been maneuvering to keep the bill out of the cutoff dates by making it part of the budget discussion. The bill was pulled because of the controversy and HB 1590, which would impose a sales tax to address affordable housing and behavioral health, passed the House 52-48 and was referred to the Senate.

Johnson voted no on this bill but also discovered how many different angles there are to legislation, and that nothing is ever easy in Olympia. And it's even harder in an election year.

Federal Way resident Bob Roegner is a former mayor of Auburn. Contact [bjroegner@comcast.net](mailto:bjroegner@comcast.net).

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# Vetting

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Department vehicle report that states he was arrested for physical control.

He also told the Mirror multiple times that he was not arrested for DUI.

In response, the Mirror looked through the nearly 30 pages of documents we obtained from the Federal Way Police Department and the Federal Way Municipal Court. Throughout the police report, we found several references to both Pagliocco's "physical control" arrest, and his "DUI" arrest.

A Federal Way Municipal Court judge also charged him with one count of physical control of a motor vehicle while under the influence, and one count of driving under the influence of intoxicating liquor or drugs. Therefore, Pagliocco's assertion that he was neither arrested for a DUI nor charged with driving under the influence is incorrect. We stand by our accurate reportage.

Transparency and accuracy play a pivotal role in our work, so we have uploaded the police and court documents related to Pagliocco's case to our website so readers can look through the information and see the facts themselves.

Pagliocco also provided the Mirror with a Washington State Department of Licensing document that states he was required to install an interlock device on his vehicle on Sept. 8, 2016, and per DOL, he was allowed to remove the

device on April 28, 2017.

We value fairness, so with the new information we updated the story's online version to reflect that Pagliocco satisfied that part of his probation, and also included a clarification that we did so.

Part of the Mirror's role as a community newspaper is vetting candidates who are running for public office. We do so through candidate interviews, by hosting candidate forums every year before the general election and, as in this case, through conducting background checks to the best of our ability.

Some news outlets use outside agencies to assist with their background checks, and some go so far as to check candidates' social media history.

We report on findings that we consider are important to Federal Way residents. If a candidate has a history of unpaid bills, how will they handle millions of taxpayer dollars? If they have a criminal history, how will they conduct themselves as a city leader? Have they learned from their mistake and how transparent are they about it?

Our goal is to ensure residents have the facts about the candidates so they can make informed decisions when they cast their ballots, or when they weigh in on appointments of elected leaders in this case.

The Federal Way City Council will interview the 19 applicants for the open seat at 8 a.m. Saturday, March 7 at City Hall.

Let them know before then who you think they should appoint to lead this city.

We welcome your letters

email us at: [letters@federalwaymirror.com](mailto:letters@federalwaymirror.com)

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