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Dear ,

In response to numerous complaints by citizens and elected officials reporting conflicts of interest by some city council members, I am asking the State Attorney General, State Public Disclosure Commission and State Auditor to conduct a thorough investigation into the personal finances and business interests of several of our council members as they relate to land use decisions and zoning proposals. I am also asking Mayor Reynolds to propose new local Ethics and Code of Conduct laws and a Citizens Oversight Board to prevent improper or illegal actions by councilmembers.

State laws prohibit elected officials or government employees from using their position for personal gain. For instance, as a State Representative, it would be illegal for me to propose or vote on legislation that could directly or indirectly increase the value of a property or business that a family member, employee, associate or I owned or had a financial interest in.

Citizen concerns and recent news stories are resulting in a backlash against proposed zoning changes and massive new development in Enumclaw. Some council members are in the real estate speculation and property management business and own and manage properties in the vicinity of the 150 acre Thomas Farm, which is the subject of some of the recent concerns. As a result of this citizen backlash, on July 18th Councilmembers Dickson, Overland and Carstens published a letter to the editor making it look like they do not support massive overdevelopment in Enumclaw. However, a series of Freedom of Information Act requests for council member's official emails seem to tell a very different story. By early 2014 some council members began trying to return the development rights to the Thomas Farm and turn it into a huge development.

At a council work session several councilmembers said farmland in Enumclaw is a "blight" and called for these lands to be developed. But we citizens bought those development rights with our hard earned tax dollars many years ago. We paid for these development rights when farmers were willing to sell them to protect our rural lifestyle and because we didn't want our kids and grandkids living in an overcrowded crime and gang infested concrete jungle. We wanted to keep these lands out of the hands of greedy real estate speculators forever and protect our historic community.

Farms, farmland and families are the heart and soul of what our community has always been and should always be in the future. I grew up and raised my family here. As a young man I worked in the woods as a logger and eventually went into police work. I entered the legislature to protect our community and our way of life. I now feel as if everything we treasure and value is under assault. A Fred Meyer and Walmart, which were proposed by some council members, are not what we need and would end up shutting down many if not most of our local small businesses that are the current backbone of our local economy.

The July 18th letter by Dickson, Overland and Carstens appeared to show them in opposition to new development, but here is a small sample of their emails which you can read for yourself and then make up your own mind as to their actual intent:

On April 22, 2014 Councilwoman Carstens writes to Mayor Reynolds, "Would the two of you be able to meet with Darrel and myself regarding the Development rights on the Thomas Farm. We would really like to be able to get this put together." On the 15th of April, Councilman Dickson had written to King County Councilman Reagan Dunn about, "Options available for the removal of the development rights on the Thomas Farm."

On May 2, 2014 Councilman Overland writes to Councilman Darrel Dickson and says, "I really think we are on the verge of some very big residential growth and I think we need to make sure that everything is ready to go."

On April 21, 2014 Councilman Dickson wrote to Councilwoman Carstens and Councilman Overland alerting them about 65,000 wealthy Chinese citizens whose immigration applications were recently denied by Canada. Dickson urged Carstens and Overland to get in touch with a man named Wayne Michael who could help in getting EB-5 visas for these 65,000 people as part of an "immigrant investor program" and that this was a, "Very interesting concept that could attract dollars to our community." Dickson wrote to Overland and Castens in another email, "Please go to the link below and learn how forming an EB-5 Regional Investor center in Enumclaw may benefit our community."

On February 4, 2014 Overland wrote to Dickson about getting a 160,000 square foot Fred Meyer store in Enumclaw, "I spoke to my regional contact at Fred Meyer, as I think both of you know, I have been working this angle since just after the election." He also says, "Our projected housing growth and South Black Diamond's growth need to be key points."

As far back as December 19th of 2013, Overland indicated in an email to Rich Menti of Meriweather Advisors LLC about bringing major growth to Enumclaw and that he was working with other council members to develop Enumclaw farmland. He says, "We will also be starting work with the County and the State to unlock a large parcel of land that is now a dairy." He offers to help this company and its efforts to turn Enumclaw farmland into developments.

These are but a very few of the emails concerning massive development of the Enumclaw area that tell a very different story from the July 18th letter to the editor. I paid for this letter to you myself because folks in Enumclaw need to know what is going on and to think about how 65,000 new residents would impact our historic rural community.

On one final note, my daughter, Kimberly Lauk, is running for an Enumclaw City Council seat this November, and although that is not my reason for writing to you today, I didn't want to be accused of obscuring or hiding that information. This letter is not intended to direct or guide you in your voting decision in that or any other race, but rather to provide you with information about the future of our town.

Sincerely,

Christopher Hurst