

August 2, 2024

Interim City Clerk
City of Stockton
425 N. El Dorado Street
Stockton, CA 95202

Dear Interim City Clerk,

We are writing to formally request that the City Council initiate a censure hearing against Councilmember Michele Padilla for her violation of Council Policy Chapter 5.10: Mayor and Council Discretionary Funding. We believe that Councilmember Padilla specifically violated policy 5.10.010 section 2. B. when she used council discretionary funds to host an event that was political in nature on Saturday, July 20, 2024 at Michael Faklis Park.

It has been well documented in articles in both The Record and Stocktonia (see attachments) that Councilmember Padilla used over \$10,000 of council discretionary funds to host a community event that became political when she invited several political candidates onstage and allowed them to give political speeches. This is a direct violation of the council policy that all council members are expected to adhere to.

In one of the articles, Councilmember Padilla states that "Every expenditure of public funds for this event was reviewed by legal counsel from the city and approved." However, she fails to mention that she never informed the city's legal counsel that the event would be political in nature. This omission is a significant breach of trust and responsibility.

We are requesting this action as per Council Policy 4.08 Council Censure which states, "In order to deter violations of law and serious violations of adopted City Policies, the City Council may take formal action against its members for such misconduct in the form of censure."

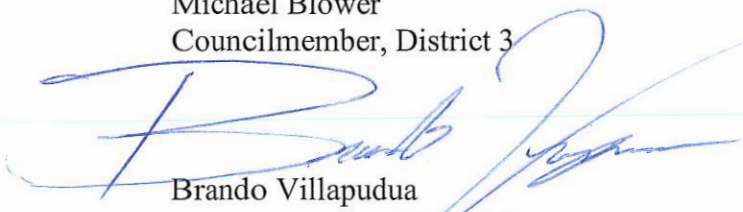
Given the severity of this violation, we request that this matter be placed on the agenda of the next regular City Council Meeting, which takes place on August 20, 2024, for a censure hearing against Councilmember Padilla. It is crucial that the council addresses this issue promptly to uphold the integrity of our city's governance.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response and the prompt scheduling of this hearing.

Sincerely,



Michael Blower
Councilmember, District 3



Brando Villapudua
Councilmember, District 5



From left to right: Stockton Mayoral candidate Christina Fugazi, City Councilmember Michelle Padilla, city council candidate Mario Enriquez, San Joaquin County Supervisor candidate Mario Gardea and city council candidate Jason Lee stand on the stage last weekend at Michael Faklis Park in Stockton last weekend. (File photo)

Padilla's party in the park reportedly violated Stockton City Council funding rules



by Cassie Dickman

1 week ago

Stockton City Councilmember Michele Padilla may have run afoul of council policy at a community event she hosted over the weekend by providing a public platform for local candidates seeking political office.

Privacy - Ten

The event reportedly cost more than \$10,000 to host and was paid for with City Council discretionary funding, which councilmembers are barred from using for political events. **Attachment A**

Stocktonia was sent several videos recorded by an attendee of the Saturday-evening event, described as a community BBQ with free food and entertainment in a flier on Padilla's social media accounts, showing four candidates that are running for office locally in San Joaquin County on a stage with the District 1 councilor and other officials giving speeches that were largely political in nature.

Reached Wednesday evening, Padilla sent a written statement in response to Stocktonia's request for comment denying she'd done anything inappropriate.

"Your question implying that there was a \$10,000 expenditure on a 'political event' seems to impose judgment before presenting all the facts," Padilla wrote, noting this was the second year in a row that she's hosted the community BBQ in her Council district.

Padilla said she's well aware of California state law surrounding the use of public resources and that she "can emphatically state that there was no violation."

"Every expenditure of public funds for this event was reviewed by legal counsel from the city and approved," Padilla wrote. "This event was open to the public, and all community members, elected or not, had the opportunity to speak. I believe in upholding the First Amendment right to speech and do not censor community members."



Local candidates running for local office speak at a community event hosted by Stockton City councilmember Michele Padilla on Saturday. Padilla may have run afoul of council policy at the event, described as a community cookout/BBQ, by providing a public platform for local candidates seeking political office.

Council discretionary money is required to be spent on resources that “will be a substantial benefit to the City and its residents,” according to Council policy, and can’t “be religious or political in nature” or used for “personal benefit.”

Speakers at the event included current Stockton mayoral candidate former Vice Mayor Christina Fugazi, Stockton City Council candidates Jason Lee and Mario Enríquez, and San Joaquin County Supervisor candidate Mario Gardea.

The only candidate to not explicitly mention they were running for local office was Fugazi, though she was shown wearing a campaign-style t-shirt. She also mentioned wanting “to work with this wonderful group of people up here” as she motioned to those standing on stage with her.

Councilmember Dan Wright, one of the most senior members of the Stockton City Council, told Stocktonia Wednesday evening that campaigning at a city event is “not okay” and a violation of city code. Wright says using discretionary funding should be done with caution and that he doesn’t typically throw his own events but will sometimes support others in the community.

Attachment A
“Let’s look at the nonprofits and the good deeds that are going on in the community, and use our discretionary monies to support them,” Wright said, adding that he would not “make any expenditure of city funds that I don’t think my constituents would support.”

Guidelines for use of discretionary **funding allocated to the mayor and councilmembers** were approved by the City Council in 2016, Stockton spokesperson Connie Cochran told Stocktonia Wednesday. The mayor is allocated \$60,000 per year, while councilmembers each have access to \$15,000. The fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

To access their discretionary funding, Cochran said the mayor and councilmembers have to first fill out a form. The form is then submitted for review and approval by the city attorney. If approved, the city manager’s office processes the requested payment.

According to documents and emails provided to Stocktonia by the city of Stockton, Padilla applied for a special city event permit in May to hold the “Annual Community Event,” with an expected attendance of 700 people. Padilla described the event on social media as the “2nd Annual Council Member Padilla’s Community Cookout.”

The cookout was held Saturday from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Michael Faklis Park in north Stockton. A flier for the event boasted live music, free food, face painting, backpack giveaway and a raffle drawing with some premium prizes, such as a 70-inch television.

Part of the process in applying to use discretionary funding includes identifying the purpose of the request.

“The object (of the event) is to bring together the diverse residents of District 1 in a relaxed and enjoyable setting,” Padilla wrote in her expenditure forms. “This is to create a sense of belonging and strengthen the bonds within our community. Constituents will be able to engage with one another, exchange ideas, and build relationships.”

She also emphasized this purpose in email communications to city staff and the mayor, where she sought support from city departments “so we can really reap the benefits of coming together as a community.”

City Council policy states that councilmembers’ expenses must have incurred within “the performance of official duties” in order for them to be covered by their discretionary funding allocations in addition to not being political or religious in nature or personally beneficial to the councilmember.

Padilla portrayed the cookout as an event that would benefit her constituents, sponsored by their councilmember.

On Friday, Padilla posted a video to social media of herself at the park to encourage community attendance. She also noted in the video that landscapers were at the park providing maintenance in preparation for the event, though it was unclear if that maintenance was funded by the city. Her city email was also included on the event's flier as a point of contact.

Videos sent to Stocktonia show that at some point during the cookout some public officials in attendance — including Fugazi, Lee, Gardea and Enríquez — joined Padilla on stage to say a few words.

Lee noted during his comments with some humor that he hadn't realized he'd be required to speak.

“Only Michelle would trick me to come out to a picnic — and I come out in house shoes — and then ask me to come up here and look crazy,” Lee joked.

Gardea, Lee and Enríquez are shown in the videos describing themselves as candidates running for office. All four candidates, including Fugazi, also briefly talked about various issues, such as public safety, homelessness, Stockton's youth, opponents and post election plans.

Lee, who is running to unseat Councilmember Kimberly Warmesley in Stockton Council District 6, also hinted that he, Fugazi, Padilla and Enriquez would together be able to take action on the City Council.

“I do a lot of education that it takes four votes to make things happen,” Lee said, before encouraging the audience to count with him the potential four-member City Council voting block on the stage with him. “All of us are aligned on the big bucket vision of the full potential of this city.”

The Stockton City Council is made up of seven members including the mayor, thus four members would constitute a majority.

Councilmembers who violate discretionary funding policies could face various disciplinary actions, including restitution to the city and criminal prosecution for misuse of public resources. City Council policy violations must be addressed during public session by a majority vote of councilmembers.

In a statement to Stocktonia on Wednesday, Warmesley said she was “deeply disappointed” that Padilla's city-funded event turned political instead of her taking the opportunity to properly use those resources in bringing the community together.

Though she recognized the importance of reaching as many potential voters as possible, Warmlesley added that using taxpayer funds in promoting election campaigns is wrong.

“Councilmember Padilla broke state and local law, and the consequences must be swift for those involved,” Warmlesley said. “Our residents depend on elected officials to ensure trust in government. Unfortunately, this event further sows mistrust in our city, our system, and our community.”

Warmlesley wants the City Council to address the issue “swiftly” and called for an investigation by the proper enforcement officials in what she described as a misuse of city funds.

“We must protect the integrity of community events from partisan agendas or political motives and keep Stockton united no matter how this election goes,” Warmlesley said.

Councilmember Michael Blower described promoting politics at a city-funded event as “a pretty egregious infraction” and said Padilla should have known better.

“It just couldn’t be more clear that it’s inappropriate to use your discretionary funds for an event that’s political in nature,” Blower said, noting that each councilmember is extensively instructed on Council policies during orientation. “The second somebody got up and started giving a political speech turned the event into a political rally.”

He agreed with Warmlesley that the Council should address the issue at its next meeting.

City documents provided to Stocktonia show that the city has so far processed payment for about \$10,300 in discretionary funding requests related to the event, which included food vendor, entertainment and city park rental costs. There is also a possibility that more requests could get approved in the coming days.

Only one of Padilla’s requested expenditures was approved and had payment processed before July 1. That means she has used more than half of her discretionary funding this year for Saturday’s event.

Padilla may have also violated permitting requirements for the event, according to city documents, which mandated that security be provided.

One check from the city to the security company Alpha Guard for \$280 was voided Monday, though payment to the company had been processed July 2. A request made to the city to void payment for the security company’s services reported that the vendor was a no show to the event.

According to a Stockton public event requirement letter, Padilla needed to provide security during the event. Documents show that it was intended for two security guards to be present during the cookout, an hour before and 30 minutes after.

Alpha Guard was approached about providing security for the event, but the contract fell through. According to an Alpha Guard representative, the company had never received a contract back from the city.

Stockton City Council's next regular meeting is scheduled for Aug. 20.

Miriam Waldvogel contributed to this report.



James

July 24th, 2024 at 9:30 PM

The same Michelle Padilla who uses her 4th grade classroom as a campaign stage for Jason Lee, and her students a political props?

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=895203042640139&set=a.460757786084669>



David Scatena

July 25th, 2024 at 7:55 AM

As usual this council member is a focus of negativity. Ms Padilla is over the edge of reliability and needs to resign before legal action is taken against her. Where is our district attorney to keep things on the up and up???



Joy

July 25th, 2024 at 12:20 PM

We aren't stupid. All four candidates up there?? It became a political event. This should be dealt with appropriately. The DA? I don't think he will do anything just like he did nothing regarding susd and the air filter scheme.



Sheila Ward-Shaw

July 25th, 2024 at 3:37 PM

The only people that could gain anything political from this event are the Host, Michelle, County Supervisor Candidate Gardea and Mayoral Candidate Fugazi. None of the others speaking are being voted on by this group from District 1.



James

July 26th, 2024 at 12:35 AM

I contacted Council Member Padilla on her official website. She denied the event was a political rally and ignore my other request to know why other candidates were not invited to her \$10,000 city fund get-together. Padilla delete my comments and questions — and banned me from her page. If I'm not mistaken, that is a violation of the 1st Amendment.



Blob

July 27th, 2024 at 5:05 PM

Focus on Mario Enriquez – he portrays himself as a “child of Stockton” who has the MOST experience in politics & public service (he cites a supposed record of ‘internships’ & other political experience)... He says he “Has nothing to do and is NOT emboldened to the 209 Times.” After all that, he will like a career (Stockton City Council) politician, VIOLATE the LAW. YOU KNOW IT NOW! Put him on the Council and expect the same-old, same-old...

Recordnet.com

LOCAL

Stockton nonprofit donors react to candidate speeches at councilmember Padilla event

Aaron Leathley The Stockton Record

Published 10:45 a.m. PT July 26, 2024 | Updated 10:45 a.m. PT July 26, 2024

Two Stockton nonprofits barred from participating in political activity donated supplies to a city council member's cookout Saturday where political candidates talked about elections onstage, the nonprofits' leaders said Thursday.

On July 20, District 1 Councilmember Michele Padilla held a public cookout at Michael Faklis Park in north Stockton.

At the event, four candidates — city council hopeful Mario Enriquez, mayoral candidate and former council member Christina Fugazi, San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors candidate Mario Gardea, and council candidate Jason Lee — spoke onstage.

The food resources nonprofit Bread of Life donated drinks to the cookout, and Stockton 209 Cares — a nonprofit supporting needy families and homeless residents — donated backpacks for the event's backpack giveaway, the organizations' founders said.

Bread of Life rescinded its donation to steer clear of laws against nonprofits supporting political campaigns, founder Gina Valadez-Bracamonte, who is also running for city council, stated Thursday.

“Based on the event’s advertisement, our staff believed the event was a celebration of community, nothing more,” Valadez-Bracamonte stated. “Our board recently learned that the event was, indeed, political.”

In contrast, 209 Cares founder Nancy Lamb felt that donating to the event did not cross the line for an apolitical nonprofit, she said.

“We weren’t involved in a political event,” Lamb said. “Being involved in a political event, you have to know that it was political, and it wasn’t ... we don’t endorse anyone,” she said.

What did candidates say onstage?

At some point during the cookout, Padilla called Enriquez, Fugazi, Gardea and Lee to the stage, the councilwoman said in an interview Thursday.

As each candidate took the mic, some of their comments conveyed specific messages about the November election, clips shared with The Record show.

“I know each and every one of us are tired of the status quo, and electing the same old, same old people who have no idea what they’re doing,” Enriquez said. “So I’m proud to say I’m running for city council.”

“To get behind anybody else other than Christina Fugazi will take the city of Stockton back a hundred years,” Lee said.

“The person she’s running against is bad for the city, he’s bad for women and he’s bad for the progress of all you who are raising children in this community.”

Enriquez is running in District 4 against Valadez-Bracamonte, and Fugazi is running for the mayor's seat against county supervisor Tom Patti.

What does the law say?

Under federal law, nonprofits such as Bread of Life and 209 Cares are barred from participating in campaigns.

"All 501(c)(3) (nonprofit) organizations are prohibited from participating in any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate running for public office," the IRS states. Politicking can lose nonprofits their tax-exempt status, the agency states.

“Donating to a political event is in direct violation” of the law, Valadez-Bracamonte stated. “(Councilmember) Padilla agreed to pay market value for all the donated products personally.”

“I see it differently,” Lamb said. “It was put on for the community.”

A nonprofit attorney did not return a call seeking comment about the organizations' participation.

Political gathering or community event?

This week, some of Padilla's city council colleagues criticized the event as an alleged violation of rules about how city money can be spent.

"It is essential to safeguard the integrity of community events from partisan influences," District 5 councilmember Brando Villapudua stated Thursday.

Padilla requested several thousand dollars of council discretionary funds to pay for the event, city expense records show.

When the city budget allows, each council member receives \$15,000 — the mayor receives \$60,000 — for activities that benefit the community, according to city council policy.

Council members may not use that money for events that are "religious or political in nature," the rules state.

Discretionary fund requests are reviewed by the Stockton City Attorney's office, and disbursed by the city manager's office, according to city spokesperson Connie Cochran.

"If in the (event) description it had anything that said, (this is) a forum for people who are running for office, they would not have signed off on it," Cochran said.

When reached by phone Thursday, Padilla was emphatic that she did not believe the cookout had been a political gathering.

"At no time did I ever feel ... or consider that this was politically driven; that their comments were politically driven," the councilwoman said.

While Padilla did not specifically invite every candidate running for a local seat this November to the event, she invited anyone she ran into, and it was open to everyone, she said.

Padilla did not know the candidates were going to talk about the election when invited onstage, she said.

"What led to that is, I was specifically speaking with regard to how partnerships are important throughout the city," the councilmember said. "I said I want to invite my friends

up, and I introduced them as my friends.”

Padilla also addressed her fellow council members' reactions to the use of city money on the event.

“I understand what they're feeling and what they're thinking,” she said. “Most definitely going forward ... I would be more cognizant.”

In a later written statement to The Record, Padilla said, “...this is an attempt by political opponents, unhappy with their own lack of support in the community, to distract from the great event that residents of District 1 enjoyed.”

“The only people interpreting this positive community event as a negative are political operatives, who seek to damage my reputation through misinformation.”

Record reporter Aaron Leathley covers government accountability. She can be reached at aleathley@recordnet.com or on Twitter @LeathleyAaron. Support local news, subscribe to The Stockton Record at <https://www.recordnet.com/subscribenow>.

Stockton councilmember Michele Padilla steps in it again

The representative of District 1 may have her good points. But she appears oblivious to government ethics.



by **Michael Fitzgerald**

2 days ago



Stockton City Councilmember Michele Padilla, (left, next to Dan Wright) speaks during a meeting in 2023. (File photo)

The flip side of corruption is incompetence. Exhibit A: Councilwoman Michele Padilla. Attachment A

Padilla was not recruited as a candidate by the 209 Times backroom politics gang for her qualifications. She was picked because District 1 incumbent Sol Jobrack refused to do the bidding of Times founder Motecuzoma Sanchez. Sanchez reportedly wanted Jobrack to vote to fire honest, competent City Manager Harry Black.

Why fire Black, you ask? No legit reason.

“Black did not cater to Motec,” said Xochitl Paderes, Sanchez’ former right-hand person. “That started his vendetta.”

Sanchez, a bitter also-ran repeatedly rejected by voters, acts as if he believes that he deserves to rule Stockton with the power and prestige of a top city official. Much of what ails Stockton politics stems from this delusion.

In this case, an honest councilman who did his homework was smeared out of office — the 209 Times alleged without evidence that Jobrack muscled developers for money — and Stockton got Michele Padilla.

Padilla is in the news again because she used tax dollars to throw an event that included campaign remarks by political candidates. That’s against the municipal code.

As well it should be. Your tax dollars should not be used to boost anyone’s campaign. If you want to donate, fine. But nobody authorized Padilla to donate for you.

It’s questionable whether Stockton City Council members should even have a “discretionary fund,” which is what Padilla used on July 20 when she spent over \$10,000 on a cookout featuring free food and prizes at Michael Faklis Park.

Each council member gets a discretionary fund of \$15,000 (the mayor \$60,000) to spend as they choose. But there are no-nos, and one is the money cannot be spent on politics.

Padilla invited city council candidates Jason Lee and Mario Enriquez, mayoral candidate Christina Fugazi, and San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors candidate Mario Gardea, to take the stage. Almost all their remarks were political.

My favorite: “I know each and every one of us are tired of the status quo, and electing the same old, same old people who have no idea what they’re doing,” said Enriquez, which was ironic under the circumstances.

Enriquez later apologized on his Instagram for the lapse.

Padilla refused. She huffed she “can emphatically state that there was no violation ... Every expenditure of public funds for this event was reviewed by legal counsel from the city and approved.”

Liar, liar, pants on fire.

On her discretionary funds application, Padilla described the event as a kumbaya exercise in neighborhood bonding. She said nothing about campaigning candidates. Had she, the City Attorney’s Office never would have okayed the expenditure, said city spokesperson Connie Cochran.

The outlay would have been iffy even without the violation, in my opinion. Blowing two-thirds of your discretionary funds on a weenie roast for a small crowd in a district of 15,000 people? Questionable judgment.

But beside the point. Violating the discretionary fund policy is punishable by a menu of penalties: loss of reimbursement; mandatory restitution to the city; having the money reported to state and federal tax authorities as income; civil penalties of \$1,000 a day and three times the value of the money spent; or criminal prosecution.

Which sanction, if any, is determined by the council in public session.

Well, the council does not meet again until Aug. 20. Whether it will discipline Padilla is unknown.

Given that Padilla is a serial offender, I hope they do. Let’s review.

After riding into office on a wave of slime, Padilla tearfully thanked her campaign manager Sam Fant, gushing he was now her “lifelong friend.” Fant pleaded no contest to conspiracy and election fraud charges in 2017. Councilman Brando Villapudua alleged Fant offered him a bribe. The district attorney declined to file charges.

Padilla also thanked her “management team” of Sanchez and Frank Gayaldo. Gayaldo being co-equal with Sanchez as a 209 Times’ smear artist.

Padilla then kicked off her council tenure by skipping part of council orientation. She just didn't show up.

“At that time I was not sworn in as a council member,” Padilla said in response to an emailed question.

Neither were Council members-elect Michael Blower or Brando Villapudua, but they showed up.

Padilla implied she had to work. “I am a full time teacher, city council is part time.” And she did attend a second orientation given by the League of California Cities. That included a class on government ethics. That makes Padilla's ethical lapses hard to understand. Unless you believe, as I do, that ethics are irrelevant to the people who recruited her. The people determined to gain majorities on local government boards using whatever pawns at hand.

Padilla's first ethical “tell” involved the annual disbursement of funds to youth programs. Mayor Kevin Lincoln stubbornly insisted that an out-of-town internet celebrity, Jason Lee, be given \$2 million of tax dollars (later cut to \$1 million) for Lee's nebulous youth program I Am Ready.

Never mind the vetting process that ensures public funds go to responsible, qualified bidders; to hell with all that good-government stuff, Lincoln insisted; give Jason Lee the money.

Lincoln, a nothingburger also brought to you by the 209 Times, is Exhibit B that the flip side of corruption is incompetence. Political incompetence in his case. Smelling a rat, a council majority defied Lincoln and steered Lee's program to the standard screening process.

Where it flunked. I Am Ready was denied funding. That's how an honest system works.

But before the vote one council member indicated her willingness to join Lincoln and just hand Lee the money — safeguards be damned — Councilwoman Michele Padilla.

Jason Lee is running for the Council, by the way, against District 6 Vice Mayor Kimberly Warmesley. He was, you'll recall, one of the candidates to take the stage at Padilla's event.

Another controversy erupted in March of 2023. Lincoln, determined to fire Harry Black — probably urged on by Sanchez — went into closed session with the rest of the council and argued that Black should be fired.

A council majority disagreed. The vote stalled at 4-3 to keep Black. Councilman Villapudua got a text message. It was from Sanchez, urging Villapudua to change his vote. Someone had violated the closed

meeting law and alerted Sanchez.

Attachment A

Who? The city hired outside investigators who charged the city \$44,000 but failed to identify the culprit. Given what you know about ethics-challenged council members, who do you suspect?

“The Council has received training regarding the **Brown Act**,” the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury wrote in a **June report**, “but some members have demonstrated open disregard for that training.”

Besides violating the Brown Act, the leak shattered the trust council members must have in each other so that closed-session discussions can be candid and thorough and lead to well-reasoned decisions. In other words, the underhanded politicking by the 209 Times’ and its funky council allies undermines city government.

The Grand Jury report said as much. It clearly implies that Padilla and Lincoln are complicit.

“Members of the Stockton City Council have enabled this SMP (social media platform) to continue a campaign of harassment through their continued association with and appointment of their associates to City Boards and Commissions,” the report says.

Lookin’ at you, Michele Padilla.

In October of 2023 Padilla released a letter saying City Manager Black had been verbally abusive and she would no longer “engage in private meetings” with him. Fair enough; but the letter was written on city letterhead. That, too, is a no-no.

Padilla argued that the muni code did not specifically prohibit using city letterhead. But the prohibition is both a municipal industry standard and common sense. Using city letterhead makes one person’s stance appear to be the council’s official position. Which it was not.

Subsequently, the Council had to divert energy to updating the city’s ethics policies. Good thing there are no pressing issues in Stockton.



From left to right: Stockton Mayoral candidate Christina Fugazi, City Councilmember Michelle Padilla, city council candidate Mario Enriquez, San Joaquin County Supervisor candidate Mario Gardea and city council candidate Jason Lee stand on the stage last weekend at Michael Faklis Park in Stockton last weekend. (File photo)

Interviewed for a Stocktonia story about those ethics policies, Padilla offered this statement, among others: “No loans or money has or was exchanged between myself and Tecvani Consulting,” Sanchez’ political consultancy.

But it says right on Padilla’s Form 460, the forms on which she discloses all her campaign’s receipts and expenditures, that she owes Tecvani \$8,000. I asked her to explain, but she merely repeated her statement: “There was no loan or financial transactions between myself, and Tecvani LLC, and or Montezuma (sic) Sanchez.”

No subsequent 460s show that she repaid Sanchez ... in money, at least. She nominated Sanchez to a couple committees, including the Planning Commission, an important job. A clear *quid pro quo*. Sanchez’ nomination died for lack of a second.

More work for the ethics department! A council committee is also looking at San Francisco's policies, which require campaign consultants to register with an ethics commission and report gifts to officials, to list clients, to report donations to candidates and any city contracts or appointments to office.

Padilla opposes this transparency. "In my opinion, consultants will no longer want to do business with campaigns if they are required to report and disclose information," she wrote.

The dishonest ones won't. That's sort of the point.

In June, Padilla filed a complaint with the Fair Political Practices Commission and police alleging that her former campaign treasurer, the above-quoted Xochitl Paderes, embezzled money from her war chest. Paderes says Padilla and Sanchez ripped her off. The jury's out.

But Padilla's own 460s raise questions about her allegations.

The early 460s are signed by Paderes when she was treasurer. The later ones, presumably filed after the two women parted ways, are signed by Padilla — all under penalty of perjury.

The thing is, with few exceptions, the dollar figures in the reports are roughly the same. Meaning that Padilla appears to have tacitly rubber-stamped Paderes' earlier accounting.

Now, guess what three individuals are listed as Padilla's witnesses in the FPPC complaint: Motecuzoma Sanchez, Sam Fant, and Frank Gayaldo. It wouldn't surprise me if one of them wrote the complaint. It would also not surprise me if they were too caught up in their dirty tricks to grasp the implications of Padilla's campaign finance documents.

A key component of political leadership is the moral compass required to understand and respect the principles behind laws regulating democratic government and campaigns. Padilla lacks this compass. Perhaps that's why she was chosen.

Michael Fitzgerald's column runs on Wednesdays. On Twitter and Instagram as Stocktonopolis.

Email: mfitzgeraldstockton@



James

July 31st, 2024 at 8:26 PM

It's clear she's on the 209 Times take. Not that it matters — but I'm trying to figure out whether she knows she is violating law and policy, and if she does, whether she even cares. Stockton deserves better than this.



David Scatena

July 31st, 2024 at 10:53 PM

Ms Padilla is either ignoring policies/laws or is completely ignorant of them. Ms Padilla needs to resign immediately. Also the District Attorney needs to step up and pursue protecting us taxpayers. Also the council needs to leave their cellphones in their cars during meetings. They cannot be used during meetings.

Too many ethical/legal lapses!



Joy

August 1st, 2024 at 6:36 AM

Padilla is being used by 209 times; I just wonder what is in it for her. She seems to break ethics rules and then play the victim when confronted about it. If you are following the rules, Ms Padilla, you don't have to always be on the defensive. Think—if quite a few people say you are lacking a moral compass and being used—then realize they are speaking the truth. Is this who you are—someone who uses dirty tricks to accomplish their goals? No one would be against you if you were playing an honest, open and up front game.



Gregory P Jacobs

August 1st, 2024 at 9:10 AM

Great tenacious-reporting.

The building industry keeps popping up in this.

They are the largest group of contributors to Kevin Lincoln.