

ESTERMAN: Candidate asserts residency in city limits

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October of 2015. I signed another lease in October of this year to renew my tenancy, which is also attached.” (Esterman did not provide the attachments to *The Nugget*, and the City of Sisters had not provided them at press time.)

Esterman went on to state that “I own a property in the Tollgate neighborhood, but it is used as my office. Recently, I placed the Tollgate property on the market because I have not lived there for over a year, and while it has been useful as an office, I prefer to be closer to town. As you may know, I operate a busy event planning company. The property in Tollgate is where I conduct my work, and the home I rent on Oak Street is where I reside.”

Esterman said that he did not enroll for garbage service because he disposes of his garbage at his employer’s business or uses Dumpsters that he rents for the events his promotion company puts on.

The candidate also challenged Green’s assertion that “for the period commencing on September 23, 2015, and ending on April 22, 2016, there was not any water consumption at Sisters Property. Thereafter, water usage has been minimal.”

Esterman cited the manner in which the City charges for water: “There is a base rate for water and sewer, which is automatically charged to the consumer, even with absolutely no consumption. However, if the consumption reads 0.00 it does not indicate that there has been zero use. The use is measured in 100 cubic foot increments, so if

use is below 100 cubic feet (748 gallons), it will appear as 0.00.”

He said, “I travel frequently for my career, and I was traveling during much of the time you have scrutinized so closely. This is reflected by the water consumption, which was not zero as I explained above, but modest use for a bachelor who travels.”

Because water readings do not record usage in the 0.0-to-100-cubic-foot range, it is not possible to verify the precise amount of water Esterman may have used.

According to Sisters Public Works Department, the average household usage in Sisters is 250 gallons per day. A household might be one person or several residing in a home.

“ I am a longtime Sisters resident and I am utterly devoted to our community. — Richard Esterman

Esterman, who has sparred with the City government over restrictions on transient merchant regulation, indicated that he finds the timing of the City’s inquiry suspicious.

“I will admit that this whole inquisition deeply offends me and I feel it is a massive invasion of my privacy,” he wrote. “I am a longtime Sisters resident and I am utterly devoted to our community. It appears that because I am disliked by the city manager, Rick Allen, he feels justified to launch a full attack on me only days before the election. The attack [is] unfounded and politically motivated in my opinion.”

Allen told *The Nugget* that the City acted to investigate an assertion by a citizen that Esterman does not live at 153 N. Oak St.

“The City Elections Clerk Kathy Nelson came to me with information based on a conversation she had with a community member that Richard Esterman was not residing in the City of Sisters,” Allen said. “She reported that information to me, as is her job as the elections clerk. Based on that report we began an internal investigation making sure the requirements to qualify for election per our City Charter were being met. We reviewed the Charter requirements and looked for information we had available that would give us any indication as to utility usage, which is one indicator determining where somebody lives; not by any means the only method, but one indicator. Upon review we discovered less water consumption than an average house; the meter showed “0” consumption for six months

(under 748 gallons/100 cubic feet). According to federal water-usage charts, an average person uses 80-100 gallons per day or 2,400-3,000 gallons per month per person compared to an average of 125 gallons per month; based on that indicator I turned that over to our legal counsel, who asked for additional documentation from Mr. Esterman.”

As of press time, Allen had not seen the response from Esterman including additional documentation.

Jan Daggett, who lives and works kitty-corner from 153 N. Oak St. at the corner of Main Avenue and Oak Street, told *The Nugget* that “nobody lives there.”

Daggett, a jeweler, spends most of her day in a corner work space that looks out at the intersection.

She said that she has never seen Esterman at the address, except when he is hosting an event in the area.

“I’ve definitely never seen anyone carrying anything in or out of the house,” she

said. “The blinds are always closed.”

A long-time Sisters resident, Daggett said she favors expanding council eligibility.

“I wish that we could pull the City Council from the school district, not just the city limits,” she said.

However, she thinks that any attempt to establish residency that is not actual is “kind of dirty pool.”

According to the City Charter, the City Council is the ultimate arbiter of whether or not a councilor or candidate is a qualified resident of the City of Sisters. Allen said that the likely course of events will be for the Council to await certified results of the November 8 election, then hold a hearing to determine if Esterman’s residency qualifies him to serve on the council.

Editor’s note: The full text of the City’s letter to Esterman and Esterman’s letter in response are available with the online version of this story at www.nuggetnews.com.

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