

**DRAFT**

March \_\_\_\_\_, 2023

**LETTER OF ADMONISHMENT AND REPRIMAND**

Mr. Jimmy Stanford  
City Councilman  
City of Burleson  
141 West Renfro  
Burleson, Texas 76028-4261

Dear Councilmember Stanford:

The City of Burleson's staff planned, organized and sponsored a social gathering for teenagers to be held at the Burleson City Library on February 14, 2023. The theme of the social gathering was an "anti-Valentine" gathering to provide a social opportunity for teenagers who are not involved in romantic relationships. The social event was based on a concept that had emerged in recent years in a number of communities to address social and emotional concerns of teenagers who felt they were excluded from the normal Valentine festivities. Several days before the scheduled event, you apparently became aware of the gathering by viewing social media postings advertising the event to the Burleson community. The City Council has been made aware that you entered the social media environment and posted a number of comments expressing your displeasure and anger over the proposed event. Your social media posts implied that it involved a "hate" based event and through the tone of your comments expressed great displeasure with the individuals who were planning and managing the social gathering. The individuals who undertook those tasks were employees of the City of Burleson performing their duties and providing services to citizens of the City of Burleson.

A number of citizens have contacted various council members expressing great concern over the character of your media responses relating to this event. The Mayor and Council have taken the opportunity to review your media postings and believe they were inappropriate and intimidating to citizens and employees of the City. Elected City Council members do not lose their First Amendment right to free speech when they assume public office, but they assume the responsibility to understand and recognize that their "speech" will be received differently from the speech of an average citizen. If you are elected as a council member, your public statements can be construed as a statement of present or future policy of the City. Your status as an elected official can leave the public with the impression that you speak for a portion of the electorate and there may be governmental action taken based upon your pronouncements. The nature of some of your social media comments seem to target library personnel and

managers, and imply that they were engaging in activities harmful to the community and its citizens. The employees in question recognize that as a council member you serve on the "Board of Directors" of the City, and in their minds have the ability to influence their success as employees of the City. It is clear that your social media commentary had a negative impact and was inappropriate for a council member.

If you believe there is a question or concern with a city program or activity, it is your right to contact the City Manager and discuss your concerns with that individual. Our City operates with a council manager form of government in which the council makes policy, but the Manager administers the City on a day-to-day basis carrying out the council's policy. The Burleson City Charter in Article 3, Section 26, Subheading B, clearly provides that a council member shall deal solely with the City Manager on matters relating to the City and its operations and clearly provides that a council member shall not give orders to a subordinate of the City Manager either publicly or privately. The nature of your social media comments clearly suggested to employees subordinate to the City Manager that they should modify or change their behavior and performance of their duties.

After carefully considering the social media postings and the comments of citizens responding to those social media postings, the City Council wishes to make its position clear.

1. The City Council does not believe that the social gathering arranged by the City Library staff was inappropriate or damaging to the community in any manner. The activity was a positive event offered as a service to the citizens of Burleson.
2. The City Council believes that the character of your social media postings had a coercive and intimidating effect on City staff even if that was not your intent when you made the postings.
3. You generated the social media postings attacking a City program without adequately attempting to investigate what was occurring thereby promulgating misinformation and damaging the credibility of a City program.

Your social media postings were unquestionably inappropriate and conduct unbecoming a City Council member. Elected officials and employees of the City of Burleson are expected to engage in behavior and to undertake actions that advance the goals of creating a positive environment for the City and its citizens. No elected official or employee should engage in activities that negatively impact the City or damage its credibility unless it occurs as a part of a formal investigation undertaken by the council collectively to achieve a governmental purpose. The City of Burleson expects and requires that its employees and officials conduct themselves in a way that reflects the values of the City and its citizens. Your social media postings relating to the Valentine's Day event clearly did not meet the standards expected of an elected official and the Mayor and City Council hereby admonish you to not engage in similar behavior in the future. If you have a question about a City program or activity, you should contact the City Manager and let the Manager's office respond to the entire City Council concerning the issue in question.

March \_\_\_\_\_, 2023

Page 3

Sincerely,

---

Chris Fletcher, Mayor

---

Victoria Johnson, Place #1

---

Rick Green, Place #2

---

Tamara Payne, Place #4

---

Dan McClendon, Place #5  
Mayor Pro Tem

---

Ronnie Johnson, Place #6