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**IN THE THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR SALT LAKE COUNTY, STATE OF UTAH**

JEFFREY D. GASTON,

Plaintiff,

vs.

JASON HALL, an individual, NATALIE
HALL, an individual, GEORGE
SCHLIESSER, an individual, and
WOODCRAFT MILL & CABINET, INC., a
Utah corporation.

Defendants.

**THIRD-PARTY DEFENDANTS'
SPECIAL MOTION FOR EXPEDITED
RELIEF**

Civil No. 230905528

Judge Chelsea Koch

(HEARING REQUESTED)

Third-Party Plaintiffs Connie Pavlakis (“Pavlakis”) and Connie Robbins (“Robbins”) (collectively the “TPC Defendants”), by and through their counsel of record, Joseph A. Skinner and Scott L. Sackett II of and for SCALLEY READING BATES HANSEN & RASMUSSEN, P.C., and pursuant to Rule 7 of the *Utah Rules of Civil Procedure* and *Utah Code Ann.* §78B-25-103, hereby submit this Special Motion for Expedited Relief (the “Motion”).

BACKGROUND

This case was commenced in approximately July 2023, with Plaintiff Jeffrey D. Gaston (“Gaston”) asserting claims against the Defendants (collectively the “Hall Parties”) due to Jason Hall’s physical assault upon Gaston as well as death threats levied at Gaston by the Hall Parties on multiple occasions as described in the Second Amended Complaint (the “SAC”). This included the delivery of death threats to Gaston by a convicted felon (an employee of Defendant Woodcraft which is owned and operated by Jason Hall), at the direction of the Hall Parties. In response to the SAC, the Hall Parties filed a *Special Motion for Expedited Relief* which was denied by this Court. A separate motion to dismiss is still pending.

In May 2025, nearly two years after the commencement of this action, and in violation of the statutory stay in place as a result of the Hall Parties’ *Special Motion*, the Hall Parties filed a counterclaim against Gaston. At the same time, the Hall Parties asserted third-party claims against the TPC Defendants.

Shortly prior to the filing of the TPC, it became known in the community that “Connie” was planning to run for Bluffdale City mayor, a position for which Defendant and Third-Party Plaintiff Natalie Hall seeks reelection. Upon information and belief, the TPC was filed by the Hall Parties to dissuade “Connie” from running for mayor or otherwise cast “Connie” in a negative light. Upon information and belief, the Hall Parties were unaware of which Connie would be running for mayor, and as a result, named the two potential “Connie” candidates in the TPC, including solely the TPC Defendants in this lawsuit based on allegations of conduct that was engaged in by numerous individuals in the community. Despite the multiple Bluffdale City

residents protesting Natalie Hall, and despite the multiple Bluffdale City residents providing witness statements to the police regarding the events surrounding Jason Hall's attack on Jeff Gaston, and despite the multiple Bluffdale City residents demanding that Natalie Hall resign from her position as mayor, the TPC solely asserts claims against the potential "Connie" mayoral candidates. As further support for the allegation that the TPC is nothing more than veiled political maneuvering, the TPC includes allegations of conduct that occurred years before any of the alleged death threats, assaults, or requests for resignation – conduct, which if actionable, could have been addressed over half a decade ago.

TPC Defendants now seek dismissal of those claims pursuant to Utah's Uniform Public Expression Protection Act ("UPEPA").

GROUND AND RELIEF REQUESTED

As grounds for the Motion, the TPC Defendants state that UPEPA applies to the claims set forth in the TPC, specifically the Hall Parties' First, Second, and Third Claim for Relief (the "Claims") for Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress, Negligent Infliction of Emotional Distress, and Defamation. The conduct and allegations described in the TPC constitute protected speech related to a matter of public concern, for which the TPC Defendants are afforded statutory protection and which are subject to UPEPA. The Hall Parties are also unable to establish a prima facie case for each of the elements of their Claims and as UPEPA applies to the Claims, the Claims must be dismissed.

The grounds for the TPC Defendants' request for dismissal are more fully described below.

STATEMENT OF RELEVANT FACTS

General Allegations

1. The entirety of the allegations of statements and conduct made by the TPC Defendants which form the basis for the Claims are found in Paragraphs 36-58, 209, 223-227, and 230-233. See *TPC* at ¶¶36-58, 209, 223-227, 230-233.
2. The attack by Jason Hall on Jeff Gaston which forms part of the basis for Gaston's claims in the SAC was widely reported by news media.

Allegations Against Connie Robbins

1. The TPC alleges that Robbins delivered a letter to a member of the Bluffdale City Council alleging that Ms. Hall was the recipient of favoritism, receiving pay increases at a rate faster than her predecessors. See *TPC* at ¶¶36-38. See "Pay Raise" letter attached hereto as *Exhibit "A"*.
2. The TPC alleges Robbins "coordinated protests inside City Council meetings, contacted the news media, and put signs up across from City Hall stating, 'Natalie Hall supports criminal behavior,' and 'Mayor Hall: Resign'", in response to criminal charges being levied against Natalie Hall's husband, Jason Hall for Assault, Stalking, and Threatening a Public Official for threats against Gaston as a potential mayoral opponent of Natalie Hall and as a supporter of Mr. John Roberts, Natalie Hall's eventual mayoral opponent. See *TPC* at ¶¶120-121, 229, 230, 231, 233.
3. The TPC alleges Robbins intentionally placed a booth next to Natalie Hall's booth at a Bluffdale City event known as Old West Days ("OWD") . See *TPC* at ¶209.

4. The TPC alleges Robbins told investigators she saw Gaston's injuries immediately after Jason Hall's assault on Gaston and that Gaston showed her his arm and told her what happened, and that there were some gouges on his arm where Gaston was bleeding. See *TPC* at ¶226.
5. The TPC alleges Robbins attempted to secure Natalie Hall's resignation from her role as mayor. See *TPC* at ¶229.
6. The TPC alleges Robbins "worked feverishly" to incite rage in other citizens by encouraging them to show up and demand Natalie Hall's resignation. See *TPC* at ¶232.

Allegations against Connie Pavlakis

1. The TPC alleges that in 2020, Pavlakis hand-delivered a letter indicating that City residents had reported that Natalie Hall and the Bluffdale City Manager, Mark Reid, were having an affair which may have contributed to Natalie Hall's abnormally high rate of pay increases. See *TPC* at 43-44. See "*Staff Complaint*" attached hereto as *Exhibit "B"*.
2. The TPC alleges Pavlakis coordinated protests inside City Council meetings and contacted news media. See *TPC* at ¶121.
3. The TPC alleges Pavlakis intentionally placed Gaston's booth next to Natalie Hall's booth. See *TPC* at ¶209, 224.
4. The TPC alleges Pavlakis told investigators that she encountered Gaston after the alleged attack on him by Jason Hall, and that Gaston was looking for the city manager, stating that Jason Hall had just attacked him. She also reported that Gaston showed her the cuts on his arms, some of which were bleeding... See *TPC* at ¶223, 225.

5. The TPC alleges Pavlakis attempted to secure Natalie Hall's resignation from her role as mayor. See *TPC* at ¶229.
6. The TPC alleges Pavlakis "worked feverishly" to incite rage in other citizens by encouraging them to show up and demand Natalie Hall's resignation. See *TPC* at ¶232. 224.

Statements to Investigators

1. Robbins told state investigators that she did not see any incident take place between Gaston and Jason Hall. See *Declaration of Connie Robbins* attached hereto as *Exhibit "C"* at ¶12.
2. Robbins told state investigators that Gaston approached her booth and asked if she had seen what happened. *Ex. C* at ¶13.
3. Robbins told investigators generally what she had observed of Gaston and what Gaston had stated to her. *Ex. C* at ¶11.
4. Pavlakis also simply told investigators what Gaston had told her and what she observed related specifically to Gaston. See *Declaration of Connie Pavlakis* attached hereto as *Exhibit "D"* at ¶15.
5. Pavlakis did not tell investigators that she had seen Jason Hall attack Gaston or any other conduct or statements made by the Hall Parties at the time of the Old West Days incident. *Id* at ¶16.
6. The TPC does not contain any allegations that the TPC Defendants made any statements to investigators about the Hall Parties, including Jason Hall. See generally, *TPC*.

7. The TPC Defendants did not make any statements to investigators about any conduct committed or statements made by the Hall Parties, including Jason Hall. See generally, *Exs. C and D*.

Booth Placement

1. Pavlakis did not place Gaston's booth in the vicinity of Natalie Hall's booth in the manner alleged in the TPC. *Ex. D* at ¶3.
2. Robbins did not place Gaston's booth in the vicinity of Natalie Hall's booth in the manner alleged in the TPC. *Ex. C* at ¶3.
3. The booth placement was exclusively determined by a vendor chairperson and vendor committee without input from Pavlakis or Robbins. *Ex. C* at ¶4; *Ex. D* at 4.

Pay Raise Letter

1. The *Pay Raise* letter was solely delivered to members of the Bluffdale City Council. *Ex. C* at ¶6.
2. The *Pay Raise* letter related to Robbins' concern regarding the use of public funds. See generally, *Ex. A*; *Ex. C* at ¶8.
3. Robbins delivered the *Pay Raise* letter to Bluffdale City Council members as they were the appropriate party to investigate the use of public funds within Bluffdale City. *Ex. C* at ¶9.

Staff Complaint

1. The *Staff Complaint* was addressed solely to the members of the Bluffdale City Council. See generally, *Ex. B*.

2. The *Staff Complaint* was delivered solely to members of the City Council. *Ex. D* at ¶8.
3. The stated goal of the *Staff Complaint* was to improve the quality of the work environment within Bluffdale City. *Ex. D* at ¶10.
4. Many of the statements in the *Staff Complaint* have nothing to do with the Hall Parties. See generally, *Ex. B*.
5. The *Staff Complaint* does not contain any representations made by Pavlakis as to her opinion of the purported relationship between Natalie Hall and the City Manager, Mark Reid, but rather, conveys concerns and representations that have been expressed to her by other citizens. See generally, *Ex. B*; *Ex. D* at ¶11.
6. The *Staff Complaint* does not accuse Natalie Hall and Mark Reid of having an affair, but rather, that they may have “an inappropriate relationship due to her power”. See generally, *Ex. B*; *Ex. D* at ¶¶11-12.

ARGUMENT

“Broadly speaking, ‘[a] SLAPP suit is a meritless lawsuit that a party initiates primarily to chill a defendant’s exercise of his or her... free speech rights.’ *MacKey v. Krause*, 2025 UT 37, ¶34, 2025 Utah LEXIS 119 (citing *Stubbs v. Strickland*, 129 Nev. 146, 297 P.3d 326, 329 (Nev. 2013) (en banc)). “UPEPA is also an anti-SLAPP law.” *MacKey* 2025 UT at ¶34. “UPEPA is designed to allow ‘early adjudication of baseless claims aimed at preventing an individual from exercising the constitutional right of free speech.’” *Id* (citing *Dimension Townhouses, LLC v. Leganieds, LLC*, No. 84969-7-1, 2024 Wash. App. LEXIS 86, 2024 WL 226768 at *4

(Wash.Ct.App. 2024).

Further, “UPEPA instructs that it ‘shall be broadly construed and applied to protect the exercise of the *right of freedom of speech* and of the press, *the right to assemble and petition*, and *the right of association*.’” *MacKey*, 2025 UT at ¶36 (*emphasis added*).

Utah courts have described the process by which a court may determine whether causes of action may be dismissed under UPEPA. Specifically, Utah courts have found that UPEPA

establishes a three-step process to evaluate a special motion for expedited relief. The first step requires the court to determine whether UPEPA applies to all or part of the challenged causes of action. The second step places the burden on the plaintiff to demonstrate that there is a prima facie case for each element of the claims under review. The third step permits the defendant to either show that the plaintiff cannot state a cause of action or that there is no genuine issue of material fact that would prevent entry of judgment for the defendant.

MacKey, 2025 UT 37 at ¶38.

I. Utah’s Uniform Public Expression Protection Act Applies to the TPC’s Causes of Action for Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress, Negligent Infliction of Emotional Distress, and Defamation.

“By its plain language, UPEPA applies to a claim based on... any statement made anywhere on a matter of public concern.” *MacKey* 2025 UT 37 at ¶42; see *Utah Code Ann.* §78B-25-107(1). The United States Supreme Court has identified that speech deals with matters of public concern “when it can be fairly considered as relating to any matter of political, social, or other concern to the community, or when it is a subject of legitimate news interest; that is, a subject of general interest and of value and concern to the public.” *MacKey* 2025 UT 37 at ¶49 (citing *Snyder v. Phelps*, 562 U.S. 443, 453, 131 S. Ct. 1207, 179 L. Ed2d 172 (2011)(cleaned up)). Utah has now (as of August 2025) adopted the United States Supreme Court’s definition of

what constitutes a matter of “public concern.” See *MacKey* 2025 UT 37 at ¶50.

The Hall Parties’ Claims as against the TPC Defendants rely entirely on “misrepresentations” and “smear letters”. See *TPC* at ¶¶36-58, 209, 223-227, and 230-233. These purported “misrepresentations” and “smear letters” relate entirely to matters of public concern: 1) Natalie Hall’s pay increases as an employee of Bluffdale City; 2) the condition of the staff within Bluffdale City, including a potential inappropriate relationship between Natalie Hall and Mark Reid; 3) statements on signs demanding the resignation of Natalie Hall as mayor (a public official); 4) coordination of protests; 5) statements made in contacting the news media; 6) statements encouraging others to appear and demand Natalie Hall’s resignation; 7) attempting to secure Natalie Hall’s resignation from her role as mayor; and 8) statements to investigators about related to Jason Hall’s attack on Gaston. See generally, *Statement of Relevant Facts*.

Each of these allegations relate to a matter of political or other public concern as they deal with attacks on City officials and the qualifications of Natalie Hall to continue as mayor of Bluffdale City. Further, as evinced by the extensive news coverage on the criminal charges levied against Jason Hall, the signs, coordinated protests, and statements related to Natalie Hall’s support of Jason Hall are all subject of a legitimate news interest. UPEPA was specifically designed to provide protections to these exact type of statements.

Based on the foregoing, and in light of a simple reading of the content of the TPC, there cannot be any legitimate dispute that all of the allegations in the TPC upon which the Claims are based relate to statements involving matters of public concern, and therefore, that UPEPA applies to each of the Claims.

II. The Hall Parties are unable to Meet their Burden to Make a *Prima Facie* case Supporting each of the elements of the Claims.

As described above, once it is determined that UPEPA applies to the Claims, the burden falls upon the Hall Parties to establish a prima facie case for each of the elements of the Claims. See *Utah Code Ann.* §78B-25-107(1)(c). For the reasons set for the below, the Hall Parties cannot establish a prima facie case as to each essential element of each of the first three claims for relief.

A. Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress

To prevail on a claim for IIED, the Hall Parties must demonstrate that the TPC Defendants “intentionally engaged in some conduct toward the plaintiff, (a) with the purpose of inflicting emotional distress, or (b) where any reasonable person would have known that such would result; and his actions are of such a nature as to be considered outrageous and intolerable in that they offend against the generally accepted standards of decency and morality.” *Bennett v. Jones, Waldo Holbrook & McDonough*, 2003 UT 9, ¶58, 70 P.3d 17. “Conduct is not necessarily outrageous merely because it is tortious, injurious, or malicious, or because it would give rise to punitive damages, or because it is illegal.” *Id* at ¶64. Further, the liability for an IIED claim “clearly does not extend to mere insults, indignities, threats, annoyances, petty oppressions or other trivialities.” *Id*.

Additionally, this Court has previously reviewed the Hall Parties’ Special Motion for Expedited relief, wherein the Hall Parties allege that the United States Supreme Court has expressly prohibited public figures and officials from recovering for IIED claims based on statements without showing (in addition to other required elements) that a false statement was

made with actual malice (knowledge that the statement was false or with reckless disregard as to whether or not it was true). See the Hall Parties' *Special Motion for Expedited Relief* at p. 12; see *Hustler Mag., Inc. v. Falwell*, 485 U.S. 46, 56 (1988). The *Special Motion* further alleges that where speech addresses matters of public concern it forecloses tort liability unless the Hall Parties can show actual malice. See *Special Motion* at p.12; see also *Snyder v. Phelps*, 562 U.S. 443, 453, 131 S. Ct. 1207, 179 L. Ed2d 172 (2011).

Here, many of the allegations, while disputed, even if true, constitute lawful conduct (coordination of protests, attempting to secure Natalie Hall's resignation, contacting the news media, and encouraging others to demand Natalie Hall's resignation). Even the alleged "smear letters" involve concerns related to the conduct of public officials, delivered solely to a member of the City Council. None of these activities involve actionable, unlawful conduct or even conduct that could be considered malicious (thereby preventing any ability to prove "actual malice"). None of the described allegations constitute the type of conduct that could be considered "outrageous" or "intolerable" as a matter of law.

Not only do the vast majority of statements and conduct described in the TPC fail to meet the threshold requirement of being "outrageous" or "intolerable", or to demonstrate "actual malice", they also are afforded protection under the inherent right of freedom of speech, the right to assemble and the right of association – all of which are the exact type of conduct and speech UPEPA was designed to protect, and for which, the TPC Defendants are afforded protections outside of UPEPA. Accordingly, the Hall Parties cannot establish a prima facie case for IIED and dismissal of the claim is warranted.

B. Negligent Infliction of Emotional Distress

To state a prima facie case for NIED under Utah law, a plaintiff must show that a defendant is liable for illness or bodily harm resulting from unintentional emotional distress when the defendant: ‘(a) should have realized that his [or her] conduct involved an unreasonable risk of causing the distress... and (b) from facts known to him [or her,] should have realized that the distress, if it were caused, might result in illness or bodily harm.’” *Hausknecht v. Frontline Mgmt. LLC*, 2023 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 161838 (citing *Carlton v. Brown*, 2014 UT 6, ¶56, 323 P.3d 571).

As described in relation to the claim for IIED and for the same reasons identified therein, the Hall Parties are unable to establish a prima facie case for NIED, as the statements/conduct do not rise to the level that they involve an unreasonable risk of causing distress. Further, while the allegations are disputed, the alleged statements were lawful and fall entirely within the TPC Defendants inherent right to freedom of speech, the right to assemble and the right of association. As a result, they do not constitute unlawful actionable conduct from which this Court could find liability for NIED.

C. Defamation

“A prima facie case for defamation must demonstrate that ‘(1) the defendant published the statements [in print or orally]; (2) the statements were false; (3) the statements were not subject to privilege; (4) the statements were published with the requisite degree of fault; and (5) the

statements resulted in damages.” *Jacob v. Bezzant*, 2009 UT 37, ¶21, 212 P.3d 535 (citing *Oman v. Davis Sch. Dist.*, 2008 UT 70, ¶68, 194 P.3d 956).

None of the allegations related to the demands for resignation and the statements encouraging others to demand Natalie Hall’s resignation fall within the scope of the TPC’s defamation claim. The defamation claim is solely limited to the *Pay Raise* letter and *Staff Complaint*, and purportedly the statements to investigators. Not only are these statements subject to privilege (as described below) and therefore not actionable, none of the statements were factual statements regarding the Hall Parties. The *Staff Complaint* described perceived problems within Bluffdale City and stated that citizens had reported a potential inappropriate relationship. The *Pay Raise* letter suggested that there may be favoritism to Natalie Hall, in light of her pay raises. The statements to investigators merely relayed what the TPC Defendants were told by Gaston and what they observed, and did not include any statements related to the Hall Parties’ statements or conduct whatsoever.

In addition, the Hall Parties’ cannot establish that the *Staff Complaint* was published as would be required to state a claim for defamation. While the publication requirement can generally be satisfied through disclosure to a single individual, intragovernmental communications generally do not constitute publication. See *Davenport V. Williams*, 2017 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 193027, see also *McCarty v. City of Bartlesville*, 8 Fed.Appx. 867, 874 (10th Cir. 2001). As an employee of Bluffdale City, Pavlakis had a duty to inform appropriate City officials of conduct that may impact the operation of the City or evince improper favoritism. The *Staff Complaint* was communicated to Bluffdale City Council members. There is no allegation that

Pavlakakis distributed the *Staff Complaint* in any other manner, and it was properly delivered to those government officials who had authority over the most senior of the subjects of the *Staff Complaint* – Mark Reid, City Manager. As the *Staff Complaint* was entirely intragovernmental, and was delivered through the proper channels, the Hall Parties cannot establish that the *Staff Complaint* was published.

As a result of the foregoing, the Hall Parties cannot establish a prima facie case for defamation, and the Claim must be dismissed.

III. The TPC Defendants’ statements are protected by the public interest privilege.

Not only are the Hall Parties unable to provide sufficient evidence to support a prima facie case for each of the Claims, all of the statements upon which the Claims are based relate to the functioning of governmental bodies, officials, and/or the expenditure of Bluffdale City funds, and therefore, are afforded the protection of the public interest privilege. The public interest “privilege applies ‘when there is a legitimate issue with respect the functioning of governmental bodies, officials, or public institutions, or with respect to matters involving the expenditure of public funds.’” *Jacob v. Bezzant*, 2009 UT 37, ¶24.

Both the *Pay Raise* letter and the *Staff Complaint* discuss the functioning of governmental officials and/or the expenditure of public funds. Further, each of these letters was

delivered to members of the Bluffdale City Council, as appropriate recipients of statements regarding legitimate concerns about governmental officials and expenditure of public funds.

Further, all statements related to the organization of protests, contacting the news media related to same, and the demands for Natalie Hall to resign, clearly involve legitimate issues involving governmental bodies and officials, including the qualification of Natalie Hall to retain her role as Bluffdale City mayor.

Additionally, the TPC Defendants enjoy qualified immunity for statements made in reporting suspected criminal conduct to police. See *Murphree v. US Bank of Utah, N.A.*, 293 F.3d 1220, 1222 (10th Cir. Ct. App. 2002). While the TPC Defendants assert that the reports to police were not related to the Hall Parties in any way (they solely describe observations and conversations of and with Gaston), even if they were allegedly actionable, they are subject to a qualified immunity.

As a result, the Hall Parties are further unable to establish a prima facie case for each of the Claims as the statements and conduct are subject to privilege.

IV. TPC Defendants are entitled to an award of their costs and attorneys' fees related to the Motion.

“On a motion under Section 78B-25-103, the court shall award costs, reasonable attorney fees, and reasonable litigation expenses related to the motion: (1) to the moving party if the moving party prevails on the motion...” *Utah Code Ann.* §78B-25-110.

Here, should the TPC Defendants prevail on the Motion, they are entitled to an award of attorneys' fees. This is especially true where the Hall Parties' have utilized the TPC as veiled

political maneuvering meant to benefit Natalie Hall's reelection campaign.

As a result, should the TPC Defendants prevail, an award of attorneys' fees is mandatory under UPEPA.

SUMMARY

As outlined above, there can be no reasonable dispute that Utah's Uniform Public Expression Protection Act applies to the allegations in the TPC as they are clearly related to a matter of public concern. Therefore, the Hall Parties are required to make a prima facie case for each of their causes of action, supported by evidence – an obligation which they are unable to meet based on a lack of evidence, protections afforded the TPC Defendants through privilege, and the lawful nature of the conduct of the TPC Defendants, even when viewed in a light most favorable to the Hall Parties.

Accordingly, the TPC Defendants are afforded protections from suits of this very nature, which are meant to thwart their lawful exercise of their freedom of speech and which, in this instance, involve a TPC meant solely to improperly and unlawfully aid Natalie Hall in her attempts at reelection. The ulterior and improper motives and means employed by the Hall Parties are clearly evident where they have previously attempted to assert defenses under UPEPA, are plainly aware of the type of conduct governed by UPEPA, are fully aware that the allegations against the TPC defendants are wholly governed by UPEPA, that the conduct complained of is not actionable, yet chose to move forward with the TPC. The only logical conclusion is that the Hall Parties have utilized this Court's processes for ulterior motives, especially in light of the significant length of time (years) that have passed since much of the

conduct complained of.

Clearly, this is the exact type of scenario and case that UPEPA was designed to prevent by affording from hampering individuals' ability to engage in political discourse, to address matters affecting their respective municipality, and to do so without threat of litigation (including the significant financial burden placed upon them through the costs of defense). This case already involves violent conduct by Jason Hall against Gaston, and the Hall Parties have doubled down on this effort by asserting baseless claims which they are clearly aware fall squarely within the confines of UPEPA.

Accordingly, this Court should dismiss the First, Second, and Third Claims as against the TPC Defendants as the Claims are subject to UPEPA and as the Hall Parties' cannot establish a prima facie case for each of the elements of the Claims. To rule otherwise would indicate that any individual could be liable for causes of action such as the Claims in the TPC for demanding the resignation of a political official and engaging in lawful efforts to promote same and it would serve to limit the right to freedom of speech, the right to assemble and the right of association. Such a position is untenable, and dismissal of the Claims is warranted. The Court should also award the TPC Defendants their attorneys' fees and costs as mandated by statute.

CERTIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE WITH RULE 7

The undersigned certifies that the *Motion*, excluding the caption, signature block, exhibits, attachments, and this certification, consists of 4,524 words, and therefore, complies with the word limit requirements of Rule 7 of the *Utah Rules of Civil Procedure*.

Dated this 22nd day of September, 2025.

SCALLEY READING BATES HANSEN & RASMUSSEN

By /s/ Scott L Sackett II
Scott L. Sackett II

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that I served a true and correct copy of the foregoing was delivered via e-filing on September 22, 2025, on the following parties of record.

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Party Defendants*

EXHIBIT A

Letter to City Council

1 of 2

This communication is a brief summary of my opinions on what I believe to be criminal conduct within Bluffdale City administration.

The purpose of this communication is to bring some attention to unlawful conduct by Bluffdale City Manager, Mr. Mark Reid and Director of Finance, Mr. Bruce Kartchner. In brief, Mr. Reid and Mr. Kartchner engaged in unlawful conduct resulting from violation of city policies and ordinances. The conduct related to improper payments made to Natalie Hall, the current mayor of Bluffdale City. The relevant ordinances and policies are the following: Legal Ordinance 2018-02, 1-10-2018 and 1.70.020 City Manager Duties, copies of which have been provided herewith.

As Mrs. Hall is now the mayor of the City of Bluffdale, and as the Bluffdale City Council has shown a lack of impartiality in the performance of their duties, the sole remaining option is to engage a third party to investigate the criminal conduct described herein. I respectfully request that you take the time to investigate this matter.

Specifically, Bluffdale City policy requires that a city employee must be placed on administrative leave at the time they declare their candidacy for office. Bluffdale City ordinances require that the City Manager adhere to all City policies.

Here, Mrs. Hall was properly placed on administrative leave on August 17, 2021, the declaration deadline for mayoral candidates. According to documents received in the GRAMA request (copy page 4, from 09/05/21-10/08/21), after Mrs. Hall exhausted her accumulated comp and vacation time, Mr. Reid, in violation of his duties as City Manager (city manager duties, page 6), approved regular and holiday pay for Mrs. Hall from 11/14/21 through 12/03/21. At that time, Mrs. Hall was still a candidate for mayor and was ineligible to receive payment from Bluffdale City. Despite specific ordinances prohibiting payment to Mrs. Hall, Mr. Reid improperly and unlawfully paid Mrs. Hall during the period of administrative leave (Ordinance 2018-02, 1-10-2018). In addition, the improper and unlawful payments were approved by Mr. Kartchner. His actions were prohibited by city policy (copy page 1). As Mayor-elect, Mrs. Hall knew it was improper to submit hours worked and to accept the pay.

Likely in recognition of the improper and unlawful nature of the payments to Mrs. Hall, and in a collusive effort to justify their conduct, Mr. Reid and Mr. Kartchner petitioned the City Council (*after payments were made*) to approve the improper and unlawful payments to Mrs. Hall by requesting permission for her to return as an employee for a couple of months. The City Council immediately denied the request (copy page 5, 5.1, 5.2). Despite the City Council's explicit denial of their request, Mr. Kartchner and Mr. Reid, in blatant disregard of the denial, subsequently approved Mrs. Hall's receipt of another improper payment.

Mr. Reid, Mr. Kartchner, and Mrs. Hall were present at multiple City Council discussions where this policy was covered in detail, all within the year prior to the improper payments, as well as the city council meeting referenced above. At no time, while Mrs. Hall was on administrative

leave, were city officials lawfully permitted to pay Mrs. Hall any amount of money for services performed for the city.

In addition, and indicative of Mr. Reid and Mr. Kartchner's improper beneficial treatment of Mrs. Hall, she received a pay raise immediately prior to being placed on administrative leave, with no justifiable basis for the increase. She was then paid that higher rate while on administrative leave, in direct violation of the law. Had any other City employee engaged in identical or similar conduct, they would have been terminated or forced to resign.

Mr. Reid and Mr. Kartchner knowingly engaged in unlawful conduct, recognized the improper nature of that conduct, and sought to cover their tracks by seeking approval of City Council, *after the fact*.

Based on the intentional nature of the unlawful conduct, which includes the misappropriation of City finances against both city ordinance and ruling by the City Council, we request this matter be investigated.

I would also like to point out that Mr. Reid and Mr. Kartchner have pushed for screening of charges (successfully) against former Bluffdale City Fire Chief, John Roberts, for misappropriation of City funds. They should be held to the same standard.

EXHIBIT B

Dear Council Members,

It is with the utmost confidentiality and trust that my name will never be revealed, that I write this letter.

I am writing to inform you of some serious issues within our staff. My goal is to gain a place of work that employees want to tell everyone that they have the best work place ever. I truly believe this is attainable.

I will be speaking in general terms, so as not to implicate those who are afraid of speaking up. Many have expressed their issues over the years. Some are no longer here because they couldn't stand it any longer.

1. There is a serious environment where employees do not feel safe coming forward with their complaints or concerns of certain employees stepping on their toes, intimidating them, even described as bullying by some.
2. As you probably already know, most complaints or issues stem around the same employees, Natalie Hall and Bruce Kartchner. They have been able to overstep in most every area of our city. I know many have probably spoken with you, yet are too afraid to submit it formally.
3. Most other complaints are of some upper management allowing such behavior to the extent that there are multiple employees who are frustrated or feel intimidated, but cannot report because they "need their job". This is unacceptable to have to work with this fear. Fear of retaliation, or the base fact that they "KNOW" that this person will be protected by management, even when things are out of line. Retaliation is real and permitted.
4. The rise in power of Natalie Hall who is supposedly part time, has been seen by both staff and residents who deal with her. Multiple people have expressed Though this environment has been going on for many years, it is beginning to overflow to be noticeable by our citizens. Multiple citizens have expressed their suspicions of Mark Reid and Natalie Hall having an inappropriate relationship due to her "power". Even as recent as this summer. These are people who have been dealing with Natalie Hall in some way or another. I am concerned. I have defended them, but no longer have the confidence to do so.
5. Our staff is losing most of its best workers – those that truly care about our city, would love to stay here long term, and money isn't the main factor. This is due to poor leadership.
6. We need a council that cares about the work environment and will step up and provide the action and implementation of leadership that is needed here.
7. There are supposed rules that are applied to some but not to others without reason.
8. Our employees need to have a voice – they need to NOT be threatened when asking for things they need. They need to feel valued at EVERY LEVEL.

Will you be the answer we are looking for?

Regards,



EXHIBIT C

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Attorneys for Plaintiffs and Third-Party Defendants

**IN THE THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
IN AND FOR SALT LAKE COUNTY, STATE OF UTAH**

JEFFREY D. GASTON,

Plaintiff,

vs.

JASON HALL, an individual, NATALIE
HALL, an individual, GEORGE
SCHLIESSER, an individual, and
WOODCRAFT MILL & CABINET, INC., a
Utah corporation.

Defendants.

**DECLARATION OF CONNIE
ROBBINS IN SUPPORT OF SPECIAL
MOTION FOR EXPEDITED RELIEF**

Civil No. 230905528

Judge Chelsea Koch

-
1. I am over the age of 18 and if requested to do so, could testify in a court of law consistent with this Declaration under penalty of perjury.
 2. I am a named third-party defendant in the above captioned matter.
 3. I did not select the booth locations for Defendant Natalie Hall or Plaintiff Jeff Gaston as described in the Third-Party Complaint.
 4. The booth selection was performed by a vendor chairperson and vendor committee

for the Old West Days event.

5. The booth assignments were made without my input.
6. I delivered the *Pay Raise* letter to a member of the Bluffdale City Council.
7. I was concerned about possible favoritism being provided to City employee, Natalie Hall.
8. The *Pay Raise* letter concerned the expenditure of public funds.
9. The *Pay Raise* letter was appropriately delivered to the City Council as they were the proper party to investigate the claims.
10. In my statements to investigators related to the incident involving Jason Hall and Jeff Gaston at the Old West Days event, I did not make any statements as to what Jason Hall did or did not do, or as to what Jason Hall did or did not say.
11. My statements consisted of my observations of Jeff Gaston and his conversation with me at that time.
12. I told investigators that I did not witness the attack by Jason Hall against Jeff Gaston.
13. I told investigators that Gaston approached her booth and asked if she had seen what happened.
14. The charges against Jason Hall related to his attack on Jeff Gaston were widely reported in the news media.

I declare under criminal penalty of the State of Utah that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated this 19th day of September, 2025.

Connie Robbins
Connie Robbins

EXHIBIT D

Joseph A. Skinner (10832)
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HALL, an individual, GEORGE
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WOODCRAFT MILL & CABINET, INC., a
Utah corporation.

Defendants.

**DECLARATION OF CONNIE
PAVLAKIS IN SUPPORT OF SPECIAL
MOTION FOR EXPEDITED RELIEF**

Civil No. 230905528

Judge Chelsea Koch

-
1. I am over the age of 18 and if requested to do so, could testify in a court of law consistent with this Declaration under penalty of perjury.
 2. I am a named third-party defendant in the above captioned matter.
 3. I did not select the booth locations for Defendant Natalie Hall or Plaintiff Jeff Gaston as described in the Third-Party Complaint.
 4. The booth selection was performed by a vendor chairperson and vendor committee

for the Old West Days event.

5. The booth assignments were made without my input.
6. Connie Robbins was not part of the vendor committee.
7. Connie Robbins had no duties at the Old West Days event related to booth assignments.
8. I delivered the *Staff Complaint* letter to members of the Bluffdale City Council, and asked that it not be disclosed to anyone at that time.
9. At the time I delivered the *Staff Complaint*, I was an employee of Bluffdale City.
10. The *Staff Complaint* contained eight individually numbered paragraphs related to concerns within the Bluffdale City work environment and was delivered to improve the quality of the work environment within Bluffdale City.
11. Only one of those paragraphs discussed the relationship between Natalie Hall (who was a Bluffdale City employee at the time) and the Bluffdale City Manager Mark Reid, which referred to multiple concerns from City residents about the relationship between Natalie Hall and Mark Reid, and simply labeled the relationship as “inappropriate.”
12. There was no reference to any sexual conduct in the *Staff Complaint*.
13. The *Staff Complaint* was specifically delivered to members of the City Council as they had oversight over Mr. Reid, whereas Mr. Reid had oversight over Natalie Hall.
14. In my statements to investigators related to the incident at the Old West Days event involving Jason Hall and Jeff Gaston, I did not provide any information as to what

Jason Hall did or did not do, nor did I make any statements related to anything that Jason Hall may have said at that time.

15. The information I provided to investigators related to the incident at Old West Days consisted of what I was told by Jeff Gaston and what I observed related to Jeff Gaston at that time.

16. I did not tell the investigators that I had seen the attack by Jason Hall or that I had seen any other conduct or heard any statement from the Hall Parties at that time.

17. The charges levied against Jason Hall related to his attack on Jeff Gaston were widely reported in news media.

I declare under criminal penalty of the State of Utah that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated this 19th day of September, 2025.

/s/ Connie Pavlakis (with permission)
Connie Pavlakis