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OMBUDS CASE 2025-0320
ETHICS REPORT & FINDINGS

Respondent: John Wilson, Assessor, King County Department of Assessments
Complainant: Claudia Balducci, Councilmember, King County Council
Investigation Team: Janna Lewis, Jon Stier, and Shawn Abernethy (retired)
Date: September 1, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The King County Ombuds Office (Ombuds Office) received a complaint in June 2025 alleging that John Wilson, the elected King County Assessor (Assessor) who directs the King County Department of Assessments (DOA), was using King County resources to contact, stalk, and harass his former domestic partner in violation of KCC 3.04 (hereinafter, Ethics Code or Code).

We[1] made a preliminary assessment of the complaint and found that it met the filing requirements of the Ethics Code, including a determination that, if found to be true, the alleged conduct could constitute a violation of the Code. Therefore, as required by the Ethics Code, the Ombuds Office conducted an independent investigation of the complainant's allegations. The Ombuds Office subpoenaed records associated with Assessor Wilson's County-owned technology assets, interviewed DOA employees, and interviewed Assessor Wilson's former domestic partner, Lee Keller. Based on our analysis and review of the available evidence, we determined by a preponderance of the evidence that John Wilson violated the Ethics Code in four separate sets of issues. The violations include:

1. KCC 3.04.020 (A): When John Wilson used County resources for his personal convenience by using his King County email address to engage in conduct expressly prohibited by court orders.

2. (A) - KCC 3.04.020 (A): When John Wilson used County resources for his personal convenience and personal gain by using his County email address and an official King County government website linked to his photo and professional information to initiate and negotiate terms for a personal residential lease.

   (B) - KCC 3.04.020 (C): When John Wilson used the power or authority of the Assessor's Office and/or his position as Assessor position by using his County-issued email address,

[1] Throughout this report, the terms "we", "our", "us", and "the Ombuds Office", are synonymous.

an official King County government website linked to his photo and professional information, and his position as Assessor in a manner intended to induce a property manager and/or property owner into a residential lease agreement for Assessor Wilson and his then-partner.

3. KCC 3.04.020 (A): When John Wilson used County resources for his personal convenience by using his County email address to contact the King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO), and in particular the Sheriff, to request KCSO perform a wellness check on Ms. Keller.

4. KCC 3.04.020 (E): When John Wilson used County facilities to participate or assist in a campaign for election by using the County email system, his County email address, and County software to support his 2025 campaign for King County Executive.

The Ombuds Office additionally reviewed the collected evidence in relation to other applicable King County Codes and policies. We also found that Assessor Wilson violated the King County Department of Information Technology's (KCIT) Acceptable Uses Policy (which describes acceptable uses of King County's technology assets by County employees) with two items of sexually explicit content that surfaced during a technology search. The violation includes:

5. KCIT Acceptable Uses Policies ITG-P-21-01: When John Wilson used sexually explicit language on County-owned resources.

Ombuds Office Role & Process

The Ethics Code establishes a general policy and specific standards to which every King County employee and elected official must adhere. The Ethics Code requires that the Ombuds, a neutral, independent official within the legislative branch of King County government, investigate and make written findings concerning alleged employee ethics violations, including a determination as to whether there is reasonable cause to believe that the respondent violated the Ethics Code.[2] The Ombuds Office makes findings based on a preponderance of the evidence standard of proof. A preponderance exists if, based on the available evidence, we are persuaded that the facts at issue are more likely true than not.

Allegations[3]

On June 4, 2025, the Ombuds Office received a complaint alleging that Assessor Wilson engaged in a pattern of stalking and harassment of at least two individual King County residents. The complaint further alleged that Assessor Wilson used King County governmental resources to engage in a pattern of stalking and harassment against one of those residents in violation of the Ethics Code. The Ombuds Office focused on one of the two individuals alluded to in the complaint as the attached supporting documentation primarily addressed Assessor Wilson's conduct with one person: his former domestic partner, Lee Keller.

Included with the complaint were copies of a Declaration of Lee Keller in Support of Motion for Immediate Restraining Order[4] and an Immediate Restraining Order[5] and Hearing Notice. In Ms. Keller's Declaration, she alleged a pattern of John Wilson's harassment, stalking and coercive control, including that he contacted her against her wishes. Ms. Keller attested that "[o]n April 21, 2025, I told him

[2] The Ombuds Office is authorized to investigate the administrative conduct of King County agencies, including enforcing the county's Employee Code of Ethics. KCC 2.52.090(5)(C), KCC 3.04.055.
[3] Our office does not make any determinations about whether the alleged actions constitute stalking or harassment.
[4] 25-3-02619-5, 5.13.25, KC Sup Ct Declaration of Lee Keller in Support of Motion for Immediate Restraining Order
[5] 25-3-02619-5, 5.13.25, KC Sup Ct Immediate Restraining Order and Hearing Notice

very clearly 'This is final. Do not contact me again and this is the final notice.'"[6] On page 2 of the Keller Declaration, it stated that "...[t]here have been more than 35 texts, 18 phone calls – including 8 from his King County office phone because I blocked his personal number." In Exhibit F attached to the Declaration there appears to be an April 27, 2025, voicemail from "John's County Phone."

The Ombuds Office considers allegations as submitted to decide whether the complaint, if found to be true, would or would not constitute a violation of the Ethics Code. If the allegations would constitute a violation, we are required by the Ethics Code to investigate. During an investigation, the Ombuds Office may broaden or narrow the scope as appropriate to the developing evidence.

Relevant Ethics Code Provisions

While the initial complaint did not list all relevant provisions of the Ethics Code, the Ombuds Office does consider the whole of the Ethics Code in an investigation.

- KCC 3.04.020 (A) **Just and equitable treatment.** No county employee shall request, use or permit the use of county-owned vehicles, equipment, materials, or other property or the expenditure of county funds for personal convenience or profit;

- KCC 3.04.020 (C) **Just and equitable treatment.** Except as authorized by law and in the course of the employee's official duties, no county employee shall use the power or authority of the employee's office or position with the county in a manner intended to induce or coerce any other person, directly or indirectly to provide the county employee or any other person with any compensation, gift or thing of value;

- KCC 3.04.020 (E) **Just and equitable treatment.** County employees are encouraged to participate in the political process on their own time and outside of the workplace by assisting a campaign for the election of any individual to any office or for the promotion of or opposition to any ballot proposition, but shall not use or authorize the use of the facilities of King County for such purposes except as authorized by RCW 42.17A.555.

Other Relevant County Policies and Guidelines

- King County Code 2.52 (Office of Public Complaints/Tax Advisor – Ombuds Office)
- KCIT Acceptable Use Policy, ITG-P-21-01 (2.21.2021)
- Political Campaign Related Activity and Use of County Resources Policy 2024-0005
- King County Board of Ethics (BOE) Advisory Opinion 08-04-1163

Investigation Summary & Relevant Evidence

As part of the investigation, the Ombuds Office interviewed witnesses and reviewed records provided by witnesses, records received in response to an Ombuds subpoena, records provided by the complainant, records provided to us by KCIT as per their searches, and King County Superior Court records. The following summarizes the information relevant to the investigation.

The Ombuds Office received a complaint against Assessor Wilson alleging, according to public reporting and court records, that he violated the Ethics Code by engaging in a pattern of stalking and harassment of at least two King County residents while using County resources and his position of authority as Assessor at the King County Department of Assessments. It was further alleged by one of those

[6] 25-3-02619-5, 5.13.25, KC Sup Ct Declaration of Lee Keller in Support of Motion for Immediate Restraining Order Pg 1

residents, John Wilson's former domestic partner Lee Keller, that he used County resources in the course of this activity which would constitute a violation of Ethics Code prohibition against the use of public property for personal convenience or profit.

As required by Ethics Code section 3.04.055(C), the Ombuds Office informed Assessor Wilson[7] on June 23, 2025, of the Ethics investigation within 20 days of receiving the complaint. We transmitted copies of the complaint documents, including the accompanying attachments, a copy of the Ethics Code, and a June 23, 2025, document titled Ethics Complaint Transmittal which summarizes the complaint and the Ombuds Office process. We provided Assessor Wilson with two opportunities to participate in our investigation, including with an attorney present if he wished. He did not accept our invitations.

As part of our investigation, we gathered records and information related to the allegations. We consulted with KCIT, subpoenaed records associated with Assessor Wilson's King County-owned technology accounts and County-issued devices. We also requested information and records from Ms. Keller, which she provided, conducted interviews with DOA employees, and interviewed Ms. Keller.

Wanting to be sensitive to Ms. Keller's allegations of partner violence, we first contacted her to determine her willingness to participate in our investigation as she would likely be a witness and custodian of records that our office would need to determine whether an Ethics violation occurred.

Initially, Ms. Keller indicated that she was John Wilson's former domestic partner and wanted to assist our office however she could. She provided almost two dozen records[8] which she thought might be of interest to our office and would prove her belief that Assessor Wilson violated the Ethics Code.

During her formal interview[9], Ms. Keller said that as a longtime crisis communicator and public affairs professional, she has known John Wilson for around twenty-five years through various professional roles. They started dating in 2021 and have since had an on and off again relationship. At the time of the interview, they did not have a relationship after dissolving their domestic partnership. Ms. Keller mentioned that there were no current restraining orders or protection orders and that "those went away along with the domestic partnership."

Based on these initial discussions with Ms. Keller and the documentation available to date, the Ombuds Office determined that the central questions to this investigation were whether Assessor Wilson used King County resources to contact Ms. Keller against her wishes, in violation of the court order provided, and/or whether he abused his position of authority in violation of the Ethics Code. Accordingly, on June 18, 2025, we issued a subpoena to KCIT. We set the subpoena parameters based on the information Ms. Keller had initially provided us, and on our knowledge of standard County technology. The parameters focused on the people named in the complaint, their telephone numbers, the types of devices to be searched, and the types of places to be searched. The subpoenaed items were narrowly tailored to target specific information and records to determine whether the allegations had a factual basis. We did not subpoena or broadly request Assessor Wilson's every call, text, email or other work product.

Also on June 18, 2025, upon receiving the Ombuds' subpoena, Lorre Wijelath, KCIT Chief Info Security Officer (CISO), reached out to Mai Trinh, Deputy Director of DOA's Information Technology Services, with a notice to preserve and produce for inspection all devices the subpoena named.

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[7] Assessor Wilson waived formal service and accepted service of the complaint electronically.
[8] Discussed in more detail later.
[9] 8.25.2025 Ombuds – Lee Keller interview.

On June 27, 2025, we met with the CISO and two KCIT security operations engineers. They explained the searches KCIT performed on Assessor Wilson's King County accounts, and we reviewed the information retrieved so the Ombuds Office would understand the format of the information. We also learned that, at that time, there were two ways devices could be registered for use with KCIT programs. KCIT has limits on what devices and what information it can search based upon where in the IT infrastructure the device is housed. There are two County systems for tracking devices, "InTune" and "Intra." A personal device with KCIT-managed software (e.g., Teams, Outlook) may be registered to the "Intra" system but wouldn't be registered to the "InTune" system. A "company-owned" (i.e., County-owned) device should be registered to Intune. This distinction matters because KCIT can only fully access devices registered in their InTune system.

The KCIT group also helped identify what types of records were going to be available to us as a result of the searches. For example, it was unlikely that there would be any Microsoft Teams (Teams) messages from before certain dates. At that time in 2025, the County routinely deleted transitory (non-substantive) messages according to the applicable records retention schedules. The KCIT group also explained that they were able to retrieve the phone and email records tied to Assessor Wilson's King County technology accounts.

We asked the KCIT group to identify Assessor Wilson's devices, both from what they located in the InTune system and what DOA said DOA had. KCIT identified a Mac Studio (a desktop computer) and an iPhone 15 as registered to InTune. They also indicated that they could see an iPad Pro 4, registered to Assessor Wilson, listed as a "company" (County-owned) device[10], but it was not listed in the InTune system. Assessor Wilson later asserted this was his personal device, and he declined to provide it for a full search. We also interviewed Brendan Camarda, a DOA employee responsible for managing and purchasing all of DOA's iPads and cell service contracts for County devices. He confirmed that DOA did not have any records of purchasing service for the device listed as Assessor Wilson's iPad. We also confirmed that the telephone number listed in the King County Teams Directory as Assessor Wilson's mobile number was not listed as receiving service through King County, nor listed as a King County device, and it appears to be Assessor Wilson's personal cell phone[11] number.

KCIT agreed to reach out to DOA and confirm any other devices assigned to Assessor Wilson and retrieve the records from Assessor Wilson's listed County-issued work cell phone. KCIT also confirmed that a copy of Assessor Wilson's King County mailbox with emails that fell within the subpoena's parameters had been retrieved and were ready for review.

After six weeks and more than two dozen emails, the KCIT group received from DOA all the devices subject to the Ombuds subpoena and confirmed a list of all Assessor Wilson's devices that would be subject to the subpoena, even if not physically available. The list comprised five devices: three cell phones[12], one Mac Studio, and one iPad Pro.

Upon examination of Assessor Wilson's iPhone Pro Max and Mac Studio devices, KCIT determined that its capabilities were inadequate to provide the search services we requested. KCIT recommended contracting with a digital forensic search firm, if needed.

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[10] KCIT was able to pull a list of applications off the iPad. We did not see DOA's proprietary residential application on it. This weighed in our decision to not further pursue a search of this device.
[11] This creates further subpoena and search barriers making transparency and accountability difficult.
[12] Two of the cellphones were older models that had been reported as lost.

Though the data and records available to us were less comprehensive than our original parameters, on review we determined we had sufficient evidence to make a determination by a preponderance of the evidence of whether there were violations under the Ethics Code. Therefore, we opted not to expend the considerable resources necessary for a deeper forensic search.

ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

As the Ombuds Office's review of the subpoenaed records progressed, we identified five sets of issues based upon their content and potential for being a violation of the Ethics Code or other County policy. We categorized them as follows:

1. Violation of Protection Orders (KCC 3.04.020(A)): Using County-owned resources for illegal purposes;[13]

2. Lake Sammamish Lease (KCC 3.04.020 (A)&(C)): Using County-owned resources, and the power or authority of a County office, for personal use, relating to Assessor Wilson's lease of a Lake Sammamish property;

3. Wellness Check (KCC 3.04.020 (A)): Records Related to Use of County Email for Law Enforcement Wellness Check;

4. Political Campaign Content (KCC 3.04.020 (E)): Campaign Related Records; and

5. KCIT Acceptable Use Policy (ITG-P-21-01, (IV)(C) and (IV)(D)(4)(d)): Explicit Content.

Each of these categories is discussed in turn below. For convenience and clarity, within each set of issues, key facts are presented with the analysis and findings:

1. Violation of Protection Orders[14]

A. Key Facts

The initial complaint against Assessor Wilson alleged that he used County resources to stalk and harass two county residents. One of the supporting documents provided with the complaint was a declaration[15] filed by Ms. Keller alleging, among other things, that Assessor Wilson was using County resources to stalk Lee Keller, his former domestic partner. The second document was an Immediate Restraining Order[16]. With further research, we found that, according to court documents, there were three Protection

[13] The Ombuds views this allegation category in line with the initial allegations we received.

[14] There were two incidents involving Bellevue Police (Incident Numbers 2023-00032693 & 2023-00044384). We mention these because there was a letter dated August 25, 2023, from Megan Stanley, Meridian Family Law, to John Wilson labeled Cease and Desist Letter and Notice of Legal Action. In that letter, Ms. Stanley made it clear that continued unwanted contact from County-owned equipment could be a violation of the King County Ethics Code.

[15] 25-3-02619-5, 5.13.25, KC Sup Ct Declaration of Lee Keller in Support of Motion for Immediate Restraining Order

[16] 25-3-02619-5, 5.13.25, KC Sup Ct Immediate Restraining Order and Hearing Notice

Orders[17] in effect at different times protecting Ms. Keller and prohibiting Assessor Wilson from contacting her, among other restrictions:

Court[18]	Cause Number	Dates in Effect
King County Superior Court	24-2-10462-3	5.9.24 to 6.27.24[19, 20]
King County Superior Court	25-3-02619-5	5.13.25[21] to 8.14.25
King County Superior Court	25-2-19510-4	7.3.25[22] to 8.5.25[23]

While the language of each Protection Order varies slightly, generally, they each include variations of the following commands that John Wilson not: stalk or harass Ms. Keller; disturb the peace of Ms. Keller; knowingly go or stay within 1,000 feet of Ms. Keller's home, workplace, vehicle, or school; assault, harass, stalk, or molest Ms. Keller; use, try to use, or threaten to use physical force against Ms. Keller that would reasonably be expected to cause bodily injury; contact the protected person through texting, phone calls, or any other means; post images of Ms. Keller online or elsewhere; and monitor or track Ms. Keller's whereabouts.

The documents that Ms. Keller provided us and records our office received in response to our subpoena showed eight instances in which Assessor Wilson used his County email address to contact Ms. Keller during time periods in which he was prohibited from contacting her by virtue of the provisions contained within the Restraining and Protection Orders:

Date	Time	From	To	Summary
6.6.24	8:21 PM	John.Wilson@KingCounty.gov	Lee Keller	Asking Ms. Keller to attend Beverly Hawkins' Celebration of Life with him in his official capacity for the Department of Assessments.
6.7.24	6:02 AM	John.Wilson@KingCounty.gov	Lee Keller	Asking Ms. Keller to attend the Downtown Seattle Association/Metropolitan Improvement District 2024 Annual Meeting and Party.
6.13.24	6:49 AM	John.Wilson@KingCounty.gov	Dan Evans & Lee Keller	Asking to visit Senator/Governor Evans with Ms. Keller when Assessor Wilson gets back into town.
6.14.24	4:10 PM	John.Wilson@KingCounty.gov	Lee Keller	Asking Ms. Keller to attend another event with him.
6.23.24	9:13 PM	John.Wilson@KingCounty.gov	Lee Keller	Forwarding information on the King County Health Beneficiary Audit (Mercer Audit).
6.24.24	4:13 AM	John.Wilson@KingCounty.gov	Lee Keller	Sending Ms. Keller a copy of the Mercer audit.

[17] Protection Order and Restraining Order are used interchangeably.
[18] All court orders were independently verified through King County Superior Court Records searches.
[19] 24-2-10462-3, 5.9.24, KC Sup Ct Petition for Protection Order
[20] 24-2-10462-3, 5.9.24, KC Sup Ct Temporary Protection Order and Hearing Notice (STKH)
[21] 25-3-02619-5, 5.13.25, KC Sup Ct Declaration of Lee Keller in Support of Motion for Immediate Restraining Order
[22] 25-2-19510-4, 7.3.25, KC Sup Ct Temporary Protection Order and Hearing Notice
[23] 25-2-19510-4, 8.5.25, KC Sup Ct Agreed Order Modifying or Terminating Protection Order

6.24.24	4:16 AM	John.Wilson@KingCounty.gov	Lee Keller	Sending Ms. Keller a second email about the Mercer audit.
6.24.24	9:02 AM	John.Wilson@KingCounty.gov	Lee Keller	Responding to one of Ms. Keller's responses. [24]

The Protection Orders also contained standard warning language that the restrained party (Assessor Wilson) could be arrested even if the protected party (Lee Keller) invited or allowed the restrained party to violate the Orders, that only the court can change the Orders, and if the Orders aren't obeyed, the restrained party can be arrested and charged with a crime. While the Ombuds Office does not make criminal charging decisions, we can unequivocally state that violating a restraining order or protection order is illegal in Washington state.

B. Code Analysis

The Ethics Code makes clear that no County employee shall use County-owned equipment or property for personal convenience or profit.[25] De minimis personal use of County-owned property by County employees may be authorized; however, **"**de minimis personal use" means personal use that is brief and infrequent, incurs negligible or no additional cost to the County and does not interfere with the conduct of County business.[26] Further, illegal uses of County email and computers are expressly prohibited under the Ethics Code.[27]

Here, Assessor Wilson's use of County resources was for a clearly personal purpose, not County business. The use violated protection orders issued by the court, which is illegal. Thus, the de minimis exception for personal convenience does not apply.

Finding 1

Based on the foregoing, we find that John Wilson used County resources for his personal convenience in violation of Ethics Code section 3.04.020(A) when he used his King County email address to engage in conduct expressly prohibited by court orders.

2. Lake Sammamish Lease

A. Key Facts

The Assessor's Office oversees the appraisal and assessment of properties, as well as the billing and collection of property taxes, for all taxable real estate located in King County. This is important here because some of the records we reviewed showed Assessor Wilson using his County email in personal transactions, including pursuing a residential lease for a property located within King County boundaries.

The records we reviewed included emails and records related to Assessor Wilson and Ms. Keller searching for a residential property to lease jointly. Roughly around March 2024, they found a property they wanted to inquire further about on Lake Sammamish, Washington, which is located in King County.

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[24] Records indicate that Ms. Keller contacted Assessor Wilson during these times, but this is irrelevant to our investigation. Neither the law nor the protection orders prevented her from contacting Assessor Wilson. Moreover, she is not a government employee and is not the subject of the investigation.

[25] KCC 3.04.020 (A)

[26] BOE Advisory Opinion 08-04-1163

[27] Id.

The property was managed through a Licensed Broker and Property Manager (hereinafter Property Manager). There are several dozen emails that are to or from Assessor Wilson's County email address where the Lake Sammamish property is the subject of those emails.

The emails between Assessor Wilson and the Property Manager included Assessor Wilson's interest in leasing the property, negotiation over the sizable rental rate, lease term, start date, pets, refundable security deposit, and number of occupants. Some emails included sensitive private documents including Social Security and Driver License information. They also included a notarized copy of the lease agreement, bank wire instructions, a punch list, and a file named "Lk Sammamish Lease Termination."

Notably, one of the email exchanges included an attached letter[28] from Assessor Wilson and Ms. Keller. It was addressed to the owner of the Lake Sammamish property. The letter[29] specifically notes that John Wilson is the King County Assessor and includes an embedded link to an official King County government website. The listed website links to the Assessor's leadership team, which includes a picture of Assessor Wilson and his short biography first on the page. See bold and underlined content in the excerpt below.[30]

Here is an excerpt from the letter of interest to the owners of the Lake Sammamish property:

> "I'm **<u>John Wilson, the King County Assessor</u>**. I've been elected countywide to this office three times since 2015. I am also active in the greater Seattle and Eastside communities, speaking to various groups about property taxes and serving on the Board of Directors of the Washington Association of Counties. I chair a committee of large county jurisdictions for the International Association of Assessing Officers. As King County Assessor, I direct a team of highly professional residential and commercial appraisers who cover all of King County. I know from traveling the county how rare it is to find a residential gem like your property, for rent."

Here is the email signature Assessor Wilson used for reference.

King County

Setting values. Serving the community. Promoting fairness and equity.

John Wilson

Assessor |Department of Assessments

(He/Him)

Department of Assessments

KSC – AS – 0708 | 201 S. Jackson St., Room 708 Seattle, WA 98104

United States of America

(206) 263-2463

https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/assessor.aspx

Ultimately, Assessor Wilson secured a lease for the Lake Sammamish property.

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[28] See Appendix A

[29] The search for subpoenaed records also recovered several Word documents in various editing stages expressing interest in different properties.

[30] https://kingcounty.gov/depts/assessor/about-us/assessors-bio.aspx

B. Code Analysis

I. Personal Use Prohibition

Ethics Code section 3.04.020(A) prohibits County employees from using county-owned equipment, materials, or other property for personal convenience or profit. De minimis[31] personal use of County-owned property by County employees may be authorized by policies of the executive, council, or other elected County officials; however, as noted above, "de minimis personal use" means personal use that is brief and infrequent, incurs negligible or no additional cost to the county and does not interfere with the conduct of county business.[32] Further, the use of email is expressly prohibited when the use is for personal gain.[33]

Assessor Wilson used his County email address to initiate and negotiate a residential lease and other rental terms including a monthly rental amount, provide necessary documents to secure the lease, and provide a punch list of repairs at the rental property. This connected series of purely personal communications relating to the terms and conditions of a residential rental agreement go beyond the de minimis use exception. Because the emails included negotiation about how much rent he would agree to pay, these activities additionally fall within the category of personal gain.

Finding 2(A)

Based on the foregoing, we find that John Wilson used County resources for his personal convenience and personal gain, in violation of Ethics Code section 3.04.020(A), when he used his County email and an official King County government website to initiate and negotiate terms for a personal residential lease.

II. Inducement Based on County Officer Status

Ethics Code section 3.04.020(C) states "Except as authorized by law and in the course of the employee's official duties, no county employee shall use the power or authority of the employee's office or position with the county in a manner intended to induce or coerce any other person, directly or indirectly to provide the county employee or any other person with any compensation, gift, or thing of value." In this case, Assessor Wilson used his County-owned email address and description of his role as Assessor to negotiate a transaction involving the property management agency and culminating in a contracted lease for Assessor Wilson and Ms. Keller to reside in a Lake Sammamish home.

This leads to a concern that Assessor Wilson, at least partially, used the power and authority of his position in a manner intended to induce the Property Manager and/owner of the Lake Sammamish property to lease to Assessor Wilson and Ms. Keller. We recognize that Assessor Wilson's inclusion of his signature block in email correspondence with the Property Manager might be interpreted in certain situations as innocuous; however, the larger context must be considered. Assessor Wilson is an elected official for King County, he is in a role that is responsible for appraisal and assessments of all property in King County including the billing and

[31] KCC 3.04.020 (A)
[32] BOE Advisory Opinion 08-04-1163
[33] Id.

collection of property taxes, and he used this signature block in a communication with a property owner. The signature block for Assessor Wilson, states "Setting values. Serving the community. Promoting fairness and equity." Next is John Wilson's name, followed by the fact he is the Assessor for the Department of Assessments.

Not only did Assessor Wilson make clear that he and/or his office sets property values, and that he is the Assessor, but in the letter to the Property Manager and property owner, Assessor Wilson included an embedded link that led directly to the official King County Assessor's website while describing what a "residential gem" the property is. Further, Assessor Wilson's letter did not say he was writing in his personal rather than his official capacity, nor did it say that the letter did not represent official positions of the Assessor's Office. The clear implication of the letter as a whole was that Assessor Wilson should receive special consideration due to his position in County government.

The King County Department of Assessments has made property tax valuations and assessments of this specific property. There is no legitimate reason for the King County Assessor to be negotiating for personal residential property and lease terms from their official County email address.

Finding 2(B)

Based on the foregoing, we find that John Wilson violated Ethics Code section 3.04.020(C) when he used the power or authority of the Assessor's Office and/or his position as Assessor by using his County-issued email address, an official King County government website linked to his photo and professional information, and his position as Assessor in a manner to induce a property manager and/or property owner into a residential lease agreement for Assessor Wilson and his then-partner.

3. Wellness Check on Ms. Keller

A. Key Facts

Another area of concern raised during our review of the KCIT subpoenaed records was a series of communications where Assessor Wilson, using County-owned technology, asked King County Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall to perform a wellness check on Ms. Keller. To preface our discussion of this issue, the Ombuds Office does not wish to bring any further harm or embarrassment to Ms. Keller. However, we must examine and publish the facts when an elected governmental official asks the head of a law enforcement agency to conduct a wellness check on a former domestic partner while there was an active restraining order against the elected official.

As background, on April 5, 2024, KCSO responded[34] to a call at John Wilson and Ms. Keller's residence. John Wilson alleged a domestic violence incident between he and Ms. Keller had occurred. The Domestic Violence Supplemental Form attached to the incident report includes several boxes for John Wilson's contact information. Of note, the email address provided is John Wilson's personal iCloud email address. On April 22, 2024, there was a follow-up email from Assessor Wilson's personal email to KCSO asking to amend this police report because he exaggerated the incident as more serious than it was.

[34] KCSO Case #C24011734

Later, on May 9, 2024, Ms. Keller filed a Petition[35] for Protection Order. The Order[36] was granted against John Wilson that same day. On May 10, 2024, at 7:37 PM, Assessor Wilson, via his personal email, contacted a KCSO deputy and King County Sheriff Cole-Tindall rescinding his above-mentioned April 22, 2024, email and requesting a wellness check on Ms. Keller. Assessor Wilson stated that he saw Ms. Keller at an event on May 9, 2024, that she did not want to talk to him, and that she was acting "distraught and agitated." He also included a photo[37] of Ms. Keller from a couple of weeks earlier. Assessor Wilson explicitly requested that someone from the KCSO conduct a wellness check on Ms. Keller. Two hours later, Assessor Wilson, this time using his County email address, sent a new separate email to Sheriff Cole-Tindall, in which he acknowledged the Sheriff was busy with a visit from the President of the United States, and again requested that someone do a wellness check on his former domestic partner; the information that he provided was that Ms. Keller was in a "manic, agitated state."

Over the next twelve hours, Assessor Wilson communicated several times with the KCSO, mostly through his County email address; he notified Sheriff Cole-Tindall that [Ms. Keller] had her attorney file for a TRO (Temporary Restraining Order[38]), he reiterated his concern about Ms. Keller and indicated he would call 911 and ask that they make a wellness check, and he acknowledged that the included photo was from April 18, but that he last saw Ms. Keller at an event on May 9 where he described her as agitated and refusing to talk to him.

During the email conversation, Sheriff Cole-Tindall responded that she did not believe the picture from three weeks prior was "imminent" and Ms. Keller not wanting to talk to Assessor Wilson was not an indication of risk of self-harm. She advised Assessor Wilson to call 911 if he believed there was a risk and to provide all the details to them.

B. Code Analysis

As stated in the previous two categories, the Ethics Code prohibits government employees from requesting, using, or permitting the use of County-owned vehicles, equipment, materials, or other property or the expenditure of County funds for personal convenience or profit. Use or expenditure is to be restricted to such services as are available to the public generally or for such employees in the conduct of official business.[39]

The Ombuds Office acknowledges that anyone can contact local law enforcement asking them to conduct a wellness check and even include the head of that agency in the request, from their personal email address. However, in this case, Assessor Wilson, who used his personal email address in the past for personal issues involving this law enforcement agency, switched to his County email address when he wasn't getting a response. Further, Assessor Wilson wanted to continue with the wellness check pathway despite Sheriff Cole-Tindall saying that a picture from three weeks prior was not imminent and Ms. Keller not wanting to talk to him is not an indication of risk of self-harm. Additionally, with the knowledge of a restraining order, Assessor Wilson continued using his official King County email to try to force a wellness check on Ms. Keller.

As an elected government official of the 13th largest county in the country, Assessor Wilson has power and authority that Ms. Keller doesn't. The Ombuds Office finds that Assessor Wilson attempted to wield

[35] 24-2-10462-3, 5.9.24, KC Sup Ct Petition for Protection Order
[36] 24-2-10462-3, 5.9.24, KC Sup Ct Temporary Protection Order and Hearing Notice (STKH)
[37] We did not see the full photograph. We were only provided a partial photograph by Ms. Keller.
[38] Parenthesis ours for the reader's clarity.
[39] KCC 3.04.020 (A)

that power under the guise of seeking help for Ms. Keller. Further, nothing in his email exchange with the KCSO appeared to be King County government related. Assessor Wilson should have been acting in his capacity as a private citizen when he made the request for a wellness check. We do not conclude that this was a genuine, County-related emergency worthy of an elected official, acting in their official capacity, to reach out to the head of a law enforcement agency to request action. Furthermore, while we cannot state for certain what Assessor Wilson's motivation was, we cannot discount the timing of Ms. Keller filing a petition for a restraining order and the timing of Assessor Wilson's desire to have KCSO do a wellness check on her.

Finding 3

Based on the foregoing, we find that John Wilson violated Ethics Code section 3.04.020(A) when he used his County email address to contact KCSO, and in particular the Sheriff, to request KCSO perform a wellness check on Ms. Keller.

4. Political Campaign Content

A. Key Facts

The parameters of our subpoena purposely did not include searching for items responsive to political campaign-related activity.[40] However, we found two items in Assessor Wilson's King County email account that contained political content related to Assessor Wilson's 2025 campaign for King County Executive.

Date	Time	From	To	Summary
5.25.25	2:38 AM	John.Wilson@KingCounty.gov	Al Dams & Chris Vance's personal email addresses	"ElectJohnWilson Exec Team---The Options" Setting a Zoom meeting to strategize and discuss media about he and Ms. Keller and the news stories at that time.
Undated		John.Wilson@KingCounty.gov		Draft email with a 6.2.25 draft Word document titled "Wilson Interim Statement MBL Edits" with a logo at top showing John Wilson for King County Executive (see picture below). The Word document addresses the allegations made by Ms. Keller and Assessor Wilson's commitment to running for King County Executive. The document's author shows as John Wilson and the company shows as the DOA.

[40] "Political Campaign Related Activity" means the act or process of supporting a candidate or a ballot measure or soliciting support – financial or otherwise – for or against a candidate for public office or a ballot measure. Political Campaign Related Activity and Use of County Resources Policy 2024-0005 (8.21.24)

Photo as mentioned in the draft word document in the undated email above.

JOHN
WILSON
for King County Executive

B. Code Analysis

The Ethics Code, and King County Policy, are clear that no County employee, or County elected official including the County Assessor, may use any of the facilities of King County for participating in the political process or assisting in a campaign for the election of any individual to any office.[41] Political Campaign Related Activity means the act or process of supporting a candidate or a ballot measure or soliciting support – financial or otherwise – for or against a candidate for public office or a ballot measure.[42] Resources such as the County email system or other internal communications, or video conferencing applications, shall not be used to display or share political campaign related images, messages, words, or symbols.[43]

Political campaign-related activity on King County technology assets is strictly prohibited.[44] The Ombuds Office found two instances of political content in the narrow search done by KCIT per our subpoena. Both the March 25, 2025, email and June 2, 2025, draft Word Document found in Assessor Wilson's Outlook draft folder are clearly identified as part of Assessor Wilson's 2025 Campaign for King County Executive. Further, the Ombuds Office concludes that Assessor Wilson understood that the March 25, 2025, "ElectJohnWilson Exec Team--- The Options" email was political in nature and not an email he could send his two subordinate employees on their King County-issued email due to the political content as evidenced by Assessor Wilson sending the email to their personal email accounts.

Finding 4

Based on the foregoing, we find that John Wilson violated Ethics Code section 3.04.020(E) when he used County facilities to participate or assist in a campaign for election by using the County email system, his County email address, and County software to support his 2025 campaign for King County Executive.

5. KCIT Acceptable Use Policy

A. Key Facts

A final area of concern arose during our review of the KCIT-produced records.[45] In reviewing the subpoenaed documentary evidence, we came across two instances on Assessor Wilson's County owned technology assets that included sexually explicit language, in violation of the KCIT Acceptable Use Policy (AUP).

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[41] KCC 3.04.020 (E), RCW 42.17A.555, BOE Advisory Opinion 08-04-1163, Political Campaign Related Activity and Use of County Resources Policy 2024-0005 (8.21.24)
[42] Political Campaign Related Activity and Use of County Resources Policy 2024-0005 (8.21.24)
[43] Id.
[44] BOE Advisory Opinion 08-04-1163
[45] The Ombuds Office reviewed this section of the complaint under King County Code Chapter 2.52.

I) Outlook contact card
We found an Outlook contact card on John Wilson's Mailbox Exchange which used vulgar and demeaning language to describe someone's job title.[46]

II. Word Document Titled "Open Letter to John Wilson"
An April 8, 2024, Word document authored by John Wilson. Most of the document is a personal, "diary-like" reflection on his relationship with Ms. Keller. However, there are parts of the document that are explicit in a sexual nature about Ms. Keller.

B. Policy Analysis
The KCIT AUP, generally, allows personal use of technology equipment by County employees;[47] however, activities that may harm the reputation of King County or staff are prohibited.[48] That Policy uses "sexually explicit" materials as an example of what is not allowed.

We will not be disclosing Assessor Wilson's exact explicit words used in the Word Document in this report.[49] The two examples, both the sexually explicit information used on the contact card and the sexually explicit information used in Assessor Wilson's letter to himself, are prohibited uses per the AUP.

Finding 5
Based on the foregoing, we find that John Wilson violated the KCIT Acceptable Use Policy when he used sexually explicit language on County owned resources.

CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the above investigation, evidence, and analysis, the Ombuds Office finds, by a preponderance of the evidence, that John Wilson violated:

1. KCC 3.04.020 (A): When John Wilson used County resources for his personal convenience when he used his King County email address to engage in conduct expressly prohibited by court orders.

2. (A) - KCC 3.04.020 (A): When John Wilson used County resources for his personal convenience and personal gain when he used his County email address and an official King County government website linked to his photo and professional information to initiate and negotiate terms for a personal residential lease.

   (B) - KCC 3.04.020 (C): When John Wilson used the power or authority of the Assessor's Office and/or his position as Assessor when he used his County-issued email address, an official King County government website linked to his photo and professional information,

[46] Job description was titled "Black Dildo Boy." We are not naming the individual it was associated with as it is highly offensive and not a legitimate concern to the public as they are a private citizen, among other things.
[47] KCIT Acceptable Use Policy, ITG-P-21-01, (IV)(C) (2.21.2021)
[48] KCIT Acceptable Use Policy, ITG-P-21-01, (IV)(D)(4)(d) (2.21.2021)
[49] We are not disclosing sexually explicit statements about Ms. Keller as it is highly offensive and not a legitimate concern to the public as they are a private citizen, among other things.

and his position as Assessor in a manner intended to induce a property manager and/or property owner into a residential lease agreement for Assessor Wilson and his then-partner.

3. KCC 3.04.020 (A): When John Wilson used County resources for his personal convenience when he used his County email address to contact the King County Sheriff's Office (KCSO), and in particular the Sheriff, to request KCSO perform a wellness check on Ms. Keller.

4. KCC 3.04.020 (E): When John Wilson used County facilities to participate or assist in a campaign for election by using the County email system, his County email address, and County software to support his 2025 campaign for King County Executive.

While not an Ethics Violation, and not a basis for penalties, the Ombuds Office also found John Wilson violated:

5. KCIT Acceptable Uses Policies ITG-P-21-01: When John Wilson used sexually explicit language on County owned resources.

<u>Distribution per KCC 3.04.055(H)</u>
John Wilson
King County Board of Ethics
King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Appendix A

March 13, 2024

Owners of 4239 206th Ave SE
Sammamish, WA 98075

Dear Owners,

We toured your stunning home in Sammamish this week, with our realtor, **John Kritsonis**, and came away with a great deal of enthusiasm. Indeed, we love it and feel that it fits perfectly with our lifestyles. We would like to move quickly to an approved application but wanted to give you a more personal approach and tell you why we feel we would be your perfect tenants, caring for your beautiful home as if it were our own.

Let us introduce ourselves. My fiancé is **Lee Keller**, a successful and respected businesswoman in this region who owns and operates her public relations firm, **The Keller Group**. She has worked for such Northwest icons as former Governor/Senator Dan Evans and Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen. She serves on several philanthropic boards, including the 5th Avenue Theatre and Seattle's World Trade Center, and is active in both the Bellevue and Seattle Chambers of Commerce.

I'm **John Wilson, the King County Assessor**. I've been elected countywide to this office three times since 2015. I am also active in the greater Seattle and Eastside communities, speaking to various groups about property taxes and serving on the Board of Directors of the Washington Association of Counties. I chair a committee of large county jurisdictions for the International Association of Assessing Officers. As King County Assessor, I direct a team of highly professional residential and commercial appraisers who cover all of King County. I know from traveling the county how rare it is to find a residential gem like your property, for rent.

Lee currently rents a beautiful home in Bellevue owned by **Windermere Luxury realtor Karl Lindor**, who you must be familiar with, as he and his partner, **John Kritsonis** represent many of the properties on Lake Sammamish and in Bellevue. Her lease is ending, as he and his wife are planning on occupying the home where Lee lives as soon as their lakefront home is sold, thus the need for her to move.

In addition, I recently finished a multi-million-dollar sale of my own home along with six other properties in Seattle's Roosevelt neighborhood to Trammell Crow where they are planning a multi-family housing development. So, I am ready to make the move out of Seattle to the Eastside, where we can start our lives together under one roof.

To sum it up, your home is stunning and a perfect fit for us. There is an inviting grandeur to it, with the beautiful marble floors, the woodwork, the large windows, and the chef's kitchen. The openness makes the main floor inviting and great for entertaining. The beautifully maintained lawn and brickwork leading to the water would be ideal for summer and holiday gatherings.

The downstairs fits our family and lifestyle. We both have grown children and have been looking for a home that would accommodate them for visits.

We really want this house as our home. It appears to be mostly move-in ready, which would accelerate this and make it easier for us to make the move more quickly, as Lee's lease ends and my situation concludes in Seattle. We can certainly afford to rent it. We have a combined annual household income of over $600,000 and we'd like to start our move sooner rather than later.

Finally, we'd like to raise a couple of things. First, we would like to lease the house for two years, if possible. Second, we wondered if you would consider a lease-to-own agreement.

In closing, we love the house. It checks so many of the boxes that would make it ideal for the lifestyle we lead. We hope this is helpful in your consideration of us as the next renters of your beautiful home.

Also, both Karl Lindor and John Kritsonis have kindly offered to be references for us, should you need to speak with either of them. We are also available at the mobile numbers below to answer any questions you may have.

Best wishes,

John Wilson
(206)

Lee Keller
(206)