

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE  
EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD

In the Matter of:

Sandy Bigelow

Respondent.

No. 2012-042

STIPULATED FACTS,  
CONCLUSIONS AND ORDER

**I. STIPULATION**

THIS STIPULATION is entered into under WAC 292-100-090(1) between the Respondent, SANDY BIGELOW, and Board Staff of the WASHINGTON STATE EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD (Board) through MELANIE DeLEON, Executive Director. The following stipulated facts, conclusions, and agreed order will be binding upon the parties if fully executed, and if accepted by the Board without modification(s), and will not be binding if rejected by the Board, or if the Respondent does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, to the stipulation.

**Section 1: PROCEDURAL FACTS**

1.1. On November 11, 2012, the Executive Ethics Board (Board) initiated a complaint alleging that Sandy Bigelow, Emergency Management Specialist with the Emergency Management Department (EMD) for the Washington Military Department (WMD) may have violated the Ethics in Public Service Act by using state resources for personal gain.

1.2. The Board is authorized under RCW 34.05.060 to establish procedures for attempting and executing informal settlement of matters in lieu of more formal proceedings

under the Administrative Procedures Act, including adjudicative hearings. The Board has established such procedures under WAC 292-100-090.

1.3. Sandy Bigelow understands that if Board staff proves any or all of the alleged violations at a hearing, the Board may impose sanctions, including a civil penalty under RCW 42.52.480(1)(b) of up to \$5,000, or the greater of three times the economic value of anything received or sought in violation of chapter 42.52 RCW, for each violation found. The Board may also order the payment of costs, including reasonable investigative costs, under RCW 42.52.480(1)(c).

1.4. Sandy Bigelow recognizes that the evidence available to the Board staff is such that the Board may conclude she violated the Ethics in Public Service Act. Therefore, in the interest of seeking an informal and expeditious resolution of this matter, the parties agree to entry of the stipulated findings of fact, conclusions of law and agreed order set forth below.

1.5. Sandy Bigelow waives the opportunity for a hearing, contingent upon acceptance of this stipulation by the Board, or her acceptance of any modification(s) proposed by the Board, pursuant to the provisions of WAC 292-100-090(2) which provides in part:

The board has the option of accepting, rejecting, or modifying the proposed stipulation or asking for additional facts to be presented. If the board accepts the stipulation or modifies the stipulation with the agreement of the respondent, the board shall enter an order in conformity with the terms of the stipulation. If the board rejects the stipulation or the respondent does not agree to the board's proposed modifications to the stipulation, the normal process will continue. The proposed stipulation and information obtained during formal settlement discussions shall not be admitted into evidence at a subsequent public hearing.

1.6. If the Board accepts this stipulation, the Board will release and discharge Sandy Bigelow from all further ethics proceedings under chapter 42.52 RCW for matters arising out of

the facts contained in the complaint in this matter, subject to payment of the full amount of the civil penalty due and owing, any other costs imposed, and compliance with all other terms and conditions of the agreed order. Sandy Bigelow in turn agrees to release and discharge the Board, its officers, agents and employees from all claims, damages, and causes of action arising out of this complaint and this stipulation and agreed order.

1.7. If this Stipulation is accepted, this Stipulation and Order does not purport to settle any other claims between Sandy Bigelow and the Washington State Executive Ethics Board, the State of Washington, or other third party, which may be filed in the future.

1.8. If this Stipulation is accepted, this Stipulation and Order is enforceable under RCW 34.05.578 and any other applicable statutes or rules.

1.9. If the Board rejects this stipulation, or if Sandy Bigelow does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, this matter will be scheduled for an administrative hearing in front of the Board and Sandy Bigelow waives any objection to participation by any Board member at any subsequent hearing to whom this stipulation was presented for approval under WAC 292-100-090(2). Further, Sandy Bigelow understands and agrees that this proposed stipulation and information obtained during any formal settlement discussions held between the parties shall not be admitted into evidence at a subsequent public hearing, unless otherwise agreed by the parties.

## **Section 2: FINDINGS OF FACT**

2.1. Ms. Bigelow was an Emergency Management Coordinator with the Emergency Management Department (EMD) for the WMD for all times pertinent to this investigation.

2.2. In the Spring of 2010, the WMD network servers were becoming overloaded. In May of 2010, the WMD's IT department conducted an audit of the server in an attempt to discover the problem.

2.3. The audit revealed that the servers were being overloaded by a large amount of stored files, many of which were discovered to be non-work related. It appeared that the EMD personnel were the main violators.

2.4. EMD personnel, which included Ms. Bigelow, were advised to remove all personal, non- work related files from the server.

2.5. In January 2011, the network server was still having operational difficulties due to large files still being store on it. On January 13, 2011, WMD IT conducted a second audit of the network servers. During this audit, EMD management requested that IT obtain screen shots of inappropriate non-work related information stored on their work stations along with the network servers.

2.6. On March 27, 2012, the EEB staff requested documents from WMD. A review of the files from a January 19, 2011 workstation audit showed that Ms. Bigelow violated RCW 42.52.160, when she used her state issued computer for her personal benefit. Some example of his misuse are listed below:

Personal Documents:

- Personal Letter (I am Sorry to Mike) – word document. (1/11/11)
- Sandra Bigelow[1] – word document. (1/7/11)
- Hardship letter – word document. (1/3/11)
- Hardship Monthly Expenses – excel document. (1/3/11)
- Favorite Potluck recipes – word document. (12/16/10)
- Personal Credit Report – word document. (12/10/10)
- Bankruptcy letter – word document.(7/23/10)
- Whit's progress report 5-010 – PDF (5/24/10)

### Classwork

- Spanish assignment 1 – word document. (5/13/10)
- Spanish assignment 2 – word document. (5/5/10)
- Spanish assignment 3 – word document. (5/13/10)
- Spanish assignment 4 – word document (5/13/10)
- Spanish cheat – word document. (5/12/10)
- Calculus homework #5 – PDF (4/27/10)
- Marco Economics – word document – (10/07/09)
- Lab 2.2 – word document. (5/6/09)
- Unofficial College Transcripts – PDF (6/17/10)
- Much more.....

### Internet favorites

- Dave rider's web site. (11/23/11)
- The get back in shape workout (1/7/11)
- The fighting Leprechaun (1/4/11)
- Kenmore dryer (12/20/10)
- US Bank (12/9/10)
- USA Job Search (6/14/10)
- Geocaching – login (10/13/09)
- Warm 106.9fm-Todays soft favorites. (10/05/09)
- Annual Credit report 12/4/08)

2.7 On May 16, 2011, Ms. Bigelow received verbal counseling from her supervisor, John Ufford regarding her misuse of state resources. At that time, Ms. Bigelow was directed by Mr. Ufford to remove any and all of her personal file from the computer system.

### **Section 3: CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

3.1. Pursuant to chapter 42.52 RCW, the Executive Ethics Board has jurisdiction over Ms. Bigelow and over the subject matter of this complaint.

3.2. Pursuant to WAC 292-100-090(1), the parties have the authority to resolve this matter under the terms contained herein, subject to Board approval.

3.3. The Ethics in Public Service Act, Chapter 42.52 RCW, prohibits state employees from using state resources for their benefit. RCW 42.52.160(1) states:

No state officer or state employee may employ or use any person, money, or property under the officer's or employee's official control or direction, or in his or her official custody, for the private benefit or gain of the officer, employee, or another.

3.4. Based on Findings of Fact 2.1 through 2.7, Ms. Bigelow used state resources for personal benefit in violation of RCW 42.52.160 and WAC 292-110-010.

3.5. The Board is authorized to impose sanctions for violations to the Ethics Act pursuant to RCW 42.52.360. The Board has set forth criteria in WAC 292-120-030 for imposing sanctions and consideration of any mitigating or aggravating factors.

#### **Section 4: AGGRAVATING AND MITIGATING FACTORS**

In determining the appropriateness of the civil penalty, the Board reviewed the criteria in WAC 292-120-030. It is a mitigating factor that at the time pertinent to this investigation, Ms. Bigelow's supervisor was aware that she was completing class assignments during work and did not tell her to stop, causing her to believe that she was within department policy and state law. It is an aggravating factor that the violations occurred over a long period and were continuing in nature.

**Section 5: AGREED ORDER**

5.1 For the violation RCW 42.52.160, Sandy Bigelow will pay a civil penalty in the amount of, two thousand, five hundred dollars (\$2,500.00). The Board agrees to suspend (\$1000.00) on the condition that Sandy Bigelow complies with all terms and conditions of this Stipulation and Order and commits no further violations of RCW 42.52 for a period of two years from the date this agreement is executed.

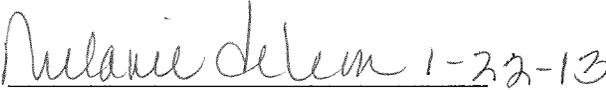
5.2 The civil penalty of \$1,500 is payable in full, to the State Executive Ethics Board within 45 days after this stipulation is accepted by the Board, or as otherwise agreed to by the parties.

**II. CERTIFICATION**

I, Sandy Bigelow, hereby certify that I have read this Stipulation and Agreed Order in its entirety; that my counsel of record, if any, has fully explained the legal significance and consequence of it; that I fully understand and agree to all of it; and that it may be presented to the Board without my appearance. I knowingly and voluntarily waive my right to a hearing in this matter; and if the Board accepts the Stipulation and Agreed Order, I understand that I will receive a signed copy.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
SANDY BIGELOW                      1/16/13  
Respondent                              Date

Stipulated to and presented by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Melanie deLeon                      1-22-13  
Executive Director                      Date

**II. ORDER**

Having reviewed the proposed Stipulation, WE, THE STATE OF WASHINGTON EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD, pursuant to WAC 292-100-090, HEREBY ORDER that the Stipulation is

✓ ACCEPTED in its entirety;

\_\_\_\_\_ REJECTED in its entirety;

\_\_\_\_\_ MODIFIED. This Stipulation will become the Order of the Board if the Respondent approves\* the following modification(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DATED this 8<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2013.

Lisa Marsh  
Lisa Marsh, Chair

Anna Dudek Ross  
Anna Dudek Ross, Vice-Chair

M. Williams III  
Matthew Williams III, Member

Michael Bahn  
Michael Bahn, Member

Samantha Simmons  
Samantha Simmons, Member

\* I, Sandy Bigelow, accept/do not accept (circle one) the proposed modification(s).

\_\_\_\_\_  
SANDY BIGELOW, Respondent                      Date