

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE  
EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD

In the Matter of:

Peter Ross

Respondent.

No. 2014-014

STIPULATED FACTS,  
CONCLUSIONS AND ORDER

**I. STIPULATION**

THIS STIPULATION is entered into under WAC 292-100-090(1) between the Respondent, PETER ROSS, and Board Staff of the WASHINGTON STATE EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD (Board) through KATHRYN WYATT, Acting 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 March 10, 2014, the Executive Ethics Board (Board) received an anonymous complaint alleging that Peter Ross, Police Officer, Central Washington University (CWU) may have violated the Ethics in Public Service Act by using state resources for his personal outside business, Brothers N Arms. The Board initiated the complaint on March 14, 2014.

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. Peter Ross 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. Peter Ross recognizes that the evidence available to the Board staff is such that the Board may conclude he 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. Peter Ross waives the opportunity for a hearing, contingent upon acceptance of this stipulation by the Board, or his 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 Peter Ross 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. Peter Ross 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 Peter Ross 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 Peter Ross 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 Peter Ross 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, Peter Ross 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. Mr. Ross has worked as a Police Officer at CWU for over seven years and was so employed for all times pertinent to this investigation.

2.2. Mr. Ross's duties include being a firearm instructor and armorer. This job requires Mr. Ross to remain current in all areas of firearms to include instruction and firearm reliability. This was partially accomplished by conducting research using the internet.

2.3. The anonymous complaint alleged that Mr. Ross was using state resources to conduct outside employment from work and that he would be spending time at his place of business during times he was on duty.

2.4. As a result of the investigation, a search of Mr. Ross's work computers revealed the following evidence to support the allegation that he was using state resources to promote his outside business:

**Outside Business, Related Documents (March 2013 through March 2014)**

- 20 PDF documents
- 44 excel Spread Sheets
- 34 Word Documents
- 2 Brothers N Arms (BNA) newsletters
- 4 BNA invoices
- 2 resumes from applicants for a position at BNA

**Non Work related movies (mov. Files)**

- 1 home movie of a small child. (10/2/2013)
- 1 movie of a gun being engraved at BNA (12/16/13)
- 1 movie of an infant child (11/17/2013)

**Emails: (October 18, 2013, through February 17, 2014)**

- Personal emails were sent/received through the following internet email logon sites:
  - Roundcube
  - Yahoo
  - Facebook

**Internet: (August 26, 2013, through February 17, 2014)**

- 249 – Roundcube web mail logons.
- 274 – Facebook.com/BothersNArmsEllenburg logons.
- 207 – Hulu.com logons.
- 100 – Yahoo.com
- 73 – Pandora .com logons.
- 46 – eburgguns.com (BNA Sales website)
- 26 – rsrgroup.com, NRA Site, login required.
- 27 – FFLsOnly.com (Gun Dealer website/blog.)
- The 2014 Shot Show. (Gun Show in Las Vegas 1/14-17/14)

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

3.1. Pursuant to chapter 42.52 RCW, the Executive Ethics Board has jurisdiction over Peter Ross 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 2.3 through 2.12, Peter Ross used state resources for his personal benefit.

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. Aggravating factors are that Mr. Ross is a Police Officer and in a position of public trust, these types of violations significantly reduce the public respect and confidence in state government employees. It is a mitigating factor that Mr. Ross believed that his internet activities were acceptable based on what he believed to be normal and approved by department management.

**Section 5: AGREED ORDER**

5.1 For the violation RCW 42.52.160, Peter Ross will pay a civil penalty in the amount of three thousand dollars (\$3,000.00). The Board agrees to suspend (\$1,000.00) on the condition that Peter Ross 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.

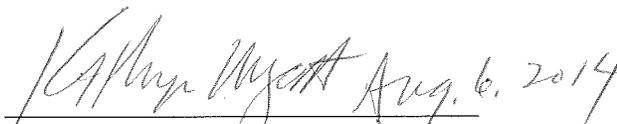
5.2 The civil penalty of \$2,000 is payable in full, to the State Executive Ethics Board within 45 days after this stipulation is accepted by the Board, or as otherwise agreed to by the parties.

**II. CERTIFICATION**

I, Peter Ross, 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.

 8-14-14  
Peter Ross      Date  
Respondent

Stipulated to and presented by:

 Aug. 6, 2014  
Kathryn Wyatt      Date  
Acting Executive Director

