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Alderman files complaint alleging violations of the Sunshine Law

Urbana's Virgil Wilson claims Rhodes, Glass at fault

By Steve Puckett
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A complaint has been filed by a member of the Urbana Board of Aldermen alleging violations of the Sunshine Law.

Chief Deputy Henry Thiesen of the Dallas County Sheriff's Department confirmed Monday afternoon that Alderman Virgil Wilson earlier in the day dropped off a complaint asserting that the violations occurred.

"We don't know where this is going. I haven't talked to the prosecutor yet, but I hope to do that sometime this week," said Thiesen, adding it might be determined by Prosecutor Wayne Rieschel that the case is not within the jurisdiction of the sher-

iff's department.

Wilson has also written a letter to the editor, which is published in this edition of the Buffalo Reflex, and in that letter he says Mayor Ursula Rhodes and board member Debra Glass engaged in behavior he alleges violated the Sunshine Law, which is the state's open meetings and records law.

"They're not going by the book," said Wilson in a telephone interview on Monday. He also questioned the mayor's nomination of two board members at once and alleged the board did not follow what he says are its long-standing policies.

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Urbana alderman alleges Sunshine Law violated

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Aldermen Andria Schmelzer and Sara Cooke were jointly appointed July 27 following a nomination from the mayor, who later said a spokesman from the Missouri Municipal League (MML) had told her that her nomination, and one vote in favor, constituted a majority. Glass voted in favor of the appointments, while Wilson voted against.

When contacted Monday, Rhodes said she was not aware that Wilson was filing a complaint and said she was also unaware of any specific allegations.

"I have no idea what he's talking about. Nothing has been said to me," said the mayor, adding that she has been following the advice of the MML and the city attorney in conducting city business.

"I don't do anything that I haven't researched first," said Rhodes.

Glass returned a call from the Reflex on Monday but said she preferred not to comment at this time.

Wilson said he contacted the Missouri Attorney General's Office "about two or three weeks ago" and that he then spoke with the county prosecuting attorney's office last week. He

said he was told he first needed to file a complaint through the sheriff's office.

In addition, Wilson said he picked up papers from the sheriff's office last Thursday and returned the completed forms on Monday.

"My understanding is the sheriff's office will take it to the prosecuting attorney's office to review it," he said.

Thiesen said he's been with the department for 25 years and cannot remember such a complaint ever being filed before.

"I've never investigated something like this before, and I'm not sure it's in our jurisdiction," he said, explaining that he thinks the attorney general's office is a possible source to conduct the investigation.

The Urbana Board of Aldermen is no stranger to controversy, as former aldermen James Messinio and Amy Wisdom recently resigned, citing bickering among the aldermen and inaction by the mayor as the reasons.



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Do Urbana leaders violate state laws ?

There are two people on the Urbana Board of Aldermen who are in violation of the Sunshine Laws - Mayor Ursula Rhodes and alderman Debra Glass. The mayor has held a council meeting without taking minutes of that meeting, which was July 22, and she has scheduled a council meeting that was to be at 6:30 p.m. on July 27. It was posted at 10:30 a.m. on July 27, and that is not 24 hours notice.

These two occasions are in violation of the Sunshine Law sections 610.021 and 610.0105. You can find these in the Sunshine Law book on pages 13 and 15. The mayor also nominated two people at the same time to be on the council without letting the two aldermen ask any questions of their qualifications. I was the only one who had questions; Glass had already made up her mind a day or two before or longer.

It has been the policy of the city of Urbana to nominate one person and then get a motion to accept this person; get a second to that, vote for one, then nominate the other person and go through the same steps with that one. It has never had two nominations at one time to fill open seats on the council. It just is not the policy of this city to do the way the mayor did on this occasion, but then again, what has she done right with this nomination?

As for Glass, she has on two different occasions violated the Sunshine Law 610.021 and 610.022. She was told both times what she was doing, and she still did it and laughed about it. On one of these occasions the mayor and city

attorney J. Christopher Allen just sat there and did not say to her what she was doing was wrong.

Aldermen (at the time) James Messinio and Amy Wisdom did tell her, but it didn't do any good, so we had to adjourn the closed session and go back to open session of the meeting. The mayor, Glass and (Bobbie) Davison (police officer) have lied about good

people in this town — some have been on the council and some have been employed by the city. They think that is the only way to get things done.

Yes, there were times they thought they had me on their side, but no way do I want anything to do with their way of thinking, for it is not for the best of the people of Urbana. Believe me, people of the city, come out to the meetings and let them know we want our city back and things done right, by the book. Take a good look at the people around you and let them know you care about this town and the people in it before it gets too far gone (it is about there).

They have already gotten two good aldermen to quit, and look what they put in their place. There is an employee working in unsafe conditions every day, but the mayor will not do anything about it. She also will not follow up on a police chief application, and she will not send out a weed ordinance. But she does have parties at the city hall.

**Alderman Virgil Wilson
Urbana**

Correction: Letter was from Danny Miller

Last week's Letter to the Editor headlined "A most disturbing piece" was actually written by Danny Miller of Louisburg, not Danny Lewis. The Buffalo Reflex apologizes for this error.