

# OREGON GOVERNMENT ETHICS COMMISSION

## PRELIMINARY REVIEW

**CASE NO:** 25-356EAM

**DATE:** August 21, 2025

**RESPONDENT:** WILLEY, Jerry, Member, Board of Directors, Clean Water Services

**COMPLAINANT:** KNUDSEN, Dirk

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Move to Investigate Possible Violations of ORS 244.040(1) and ORS 244.120(2)

**PRELIMINARY REVIEW:** The Oregon Government Ethics Commission (Commission) received a signed written complaint on June 24, 2025 from Dirk Knudsen. Dirk Knudsen alleges that Jerry Willey, a Member of the Board of Directors (Board) for Clean Water Services and Commissioner for the Washington County Board of Commissioners, may have violated Oregon Government Ethics Law by using his official position for personal financial gain. (#PR1). Receipt of the complaint was acknowledged in letters to Dirk Knudsen and Jerry Willey. Jerry Willey was provided with the information received in the complaint and invited to provide any information that would assist the Commission in conducting this preliminary review.

### **Background Information**

Clean Water Services (CWS) is a County Service District under ORS Chapter 451 and special district under ORS Chapter 198 that serves as a separately managed and financed public utility in Washington County. The CWS Board of Directors is made up of five elected officials who also serve as Washington County Commissioners. Jerry Willey has served as a CWS Board Member since 2019. (#PR2).

### **Complaint**

In the complaint, Dirk Knudsen states that Jerry Willey, as a Board Member for the

1 CWS Board of Directors, travelled on behalf of CWS and accepted unauthorized travel  
2 benefits from CWS. The complaint states that CWS has about 600,000 consumers in  
3 Washington County, and taxpayers have no choice but to fund CWS. It states that  
4 ratepayers have had their fees increased, yet the CWS Board and other CWS  
5 executives have participated in wasteful and reckless spending. The complaint states  
6 that CWS Board Members may have accepted frivolous travel benefits including luxury  
7 accommodation, 5-star dining, gifts, and other travel expenses when they traveled on  
8 behalf of CWS. (#PR1).

9  
10 The complaint states that Jerry Willey may have traveled to Toronto, Canada to attend  
11 the 2024 International Water Association (IWA) Congress for CWS. The complaint  
12 asserts that the CWS Board Directors were not qualified to participate in this event, and  
13 more relevant executives from appropriate divisions within CWS could have been  
14 utilized. The complaint also states that CWS executives may have used elaborate  
15 travel, meals, and gifts to obtain the goodwill of the CWS Board members in an attempt  
16 to influence policies and obtain budgetary increases. (#PR1).

17  
18 The complaint states that CWS Board Directors, who also serve as Washington County  
19 Commissioners, may have been required to follow Washington County rules and  
20 policies on travel and spending, and it alleges that the Board members may have  
21 exceeded the allowances provided by both CWS and Washington County policies,  
22 rules, and procedures. (#PR1).

## 23 24 Response

25 On August 8, 2025, Commission staff spoke with Jerry Willey on the phone. Jerry Willey  
26 stated that he went on two trips on behalf of CWS. He stated that he was gathering  
27 records for those trips and would be providing them to Commission staff. Jerry Willey  
28 also stated that he booked his own flights when he traveled on CWS business because  
29 he liked to select his own flights and seats. He stated that he included his personal  
30 frequent flyer number for flight rewards when he booked his flights for CWS. (#PR7).

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1 2024 Toronto - IWA Conference

2 Jerry Willey provided Commission staff with the Travel/Training Reconciliation Form  
3 submitted to CWS on September 17, 2024 for the 2024 Toronto IWA Conference (IWA  
4 Conference). Jerry Willey also provided copies of his flight itinerary, hotel receipt,  
5 conference schedule, and per diem rate calculations. (#PR8).

6  
7 The records provided indicate that CWS reimbursed Jerry Willey for a main cabin seat  
8 on a round-trip Alaska Airlines flight to Toronto departing on August 11, 2024, and  
9 returning on August 16, 2024. It appears that Jerry Willey also purchased a second  
10 flight to Toronto for Judith Willey aka Judy Willey. Jerry Willey only requested and  
11 received reimbursement from CWS for his flight. It also appears that Jerry Willey  
12 included his personal Alaska Airlines mileage number and received a "MVP Gold guest  
13 upgrade." The records indicate that Jerry Willey stayed at the Toronto Marriott hotel  
14 while attending the IWA Conference. The IWA Conference itinerary indicates that the  
15 Toronto Marriott hotel is approximately a 10-minute walk to the convention center, and  
16 the hotel invoice indicates that CWS may have received a group rate when they booked  
17 his room. (#PR8).

18  
19 The Travel/Training Reconciliation Form submitted by Jerry Willey indicates that he  
20 received partial per diem for six days based on the US Department of State GSA per  
21 diem rate. The IWA Conference itinerary also identifies two restaurant reservations for  
22 CWS attendees' meals: Jump Restaurant and Evviva; however, the information is  
23 unclear whether Jerry Willey participated in those meals. The information indicates that  
24 CWS was charged \$157.96 for Judy Willey's "Gala Dinner." The information indicates  
25 that Jerry Willey reimbursed CWS for Judy Willey's gala dinner. The information is  
26 unclear whether CWS paid \$157.96 for Jerry Willey to attend a gala dinner. (#PR8).

27  
28 2024 New Orleans - WEFTEC

29 Jerry Willey provided records that he attended the 2024 Water Environment  
30 Federation's Technical Exhibition and Conference (WEFTEC) in New Orleans in his role  
31 as a CWS Board Member. (#PR9).

1 Jerry Willey, along with other CWS officials, stayed at the Omni Riverfront Hotel in New  
2 Orleans. The itinerary for the October 5-9, 2024 WEFTEC indicates that the Omni  
3 Riverfront Hotel was one of the designated conference hotels with shuttles to the  
4 convention center. (#PR9).

5  
6 The receipt for Jerry Willey's round-trip flight to New Orleans indicates that he booked a  
7 main cabin flight on American Airlines, and he was waitlisted for Premium Class and  
8 First Class. The information indicates that Jerry Willey included his Alaska Airlines MVP  
9 OneWorld Ruby frequent flyer number for rewards when he booked his flight. CWS  
10 reimbursed Jerry Willey for the full cost of his round trip flight to New Orleans. The  
11 Travel/Training Reconciliation Form submitted by Jerry Willey indicates that he was  
12 reimbursed for Ubers to and from the airport, and he was paid per diem for meals and  
13 incidental expenses based on the GSA rate for FY2025. (#PR9).

#### 14 15 General Expenses

16 CWS provided multiple spreadsheets of general expenses for the 2021, 2022, 2023, and  
17 2024 fiscal years. Based on the information in the spreadsheets, CWS appears to have  
18 reimbursed Jerry Willey for travel expenses related to the IWA Conference and the New  
19 Orleans WEFTEC in 2024. The spreadsheets do not identify reimbursements for any  
20 specific meals, but they do reflect reimbursements for airfare, per diem, incidentals,  
21 mileage, Ubers, taxis, and parking. (#PR3).

#### 22 23 CWS Travel Policy

24 Commission staff reviewed the CWS Travel Policy, effective as of March 1, 2012. Based  
25 on the information obtained by Commission staff, this travel policy appears to be the  
26 travel policy in effect for all times relevant to this preliminary review. The CWS travel  
27 policy states, "It is the District's intent to reimburse *employees* for reasonable, ordinary,  
28 and necessary business expenses incurred when traveling on behalf of the District, in  
29 accordance with this Policy." [emphasis added.] Although the CWS travel policy appears  
30 to specifically address employee travel, it does not appear to apply to Board Members'  
31 travel. (#PR4).

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1 Washington County Travel Policy

2 Washington County Policy 402 - Travel and Business Expense, amended on May 18,  
3 2021, states that the policy applies to anyone traveling on County business unless  
4 otherwise directed by contract. The policy further clarifies that the elected officials are  
5 employees of the County for income tax purposes and, for this reason, are subject to this  
6 policy. The policy states that travel and business expenses must be “reasonable and  
7 necessary.” It states that individuals traveling on County business are expected to be  
8 prudent and only incur costs they normally would incur if traveling at their own expense,  
9 and expenses solely for the benefit of an individual are not allowable. (#PR5).

10  
11 Tanya Ange Phone Call

12 On August 6, 2025 Commission staff spoke with Tanya Ange, County Administrator for  
13 Washington County. Tanya Ange explained that CWS used to be a component unit of  
14 Washington County, but CWS has since separated from Washington County. She  
15 explained that, although the same individuals serve both governing bodies, they function  
16 as separate entities with their own organizational structures and policies. (#PR6).

17  
18 Tanya Ange explained that Washington County Commissioners need to apply for  
19 approval of County training and travel through the County Administrative Office to ensure  
20 that there are funds available in the budget for their travel, and to ensure that it is within  
21 policy. She explained that the County is not responsible for reviewing CWS travel. She  
22 stated that, when on County business, the Commissioners are subject to County policy,  
23 and when on CWS business, they are subject to CWS policy. (#PR6).

24  
25 Statutory Authority

26 ORS 198.190 allows special districts, like CWS, to provide compensation of up to \$50  
27 per day to its Board Members. Additionally, ORS 198.190 authorizes “[t]he governing  
28 body may provide reimbursement of a member for actual and reasonable traveling and  
29 other expenses necessarily incurred by a member in performing official duties.” In this  
30 instance, the CWS Board of Directors is the “governing body.”

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1 **RECOMMENDATION:** Jerry Willey is a Board Member for the Clean Water Services  
2 and has held that position since 2019. As such, he is a public official, as defined in ORS  
3 244.020(15), and therefore subject to Oregon Government Ethics Law.

4  
5 Use of Office

6 ORS 244.040(1) prohibits a public official from using or attempting to use the official's  
7 position to obtain a financial benefit or avoid a financial detriment for the official, a  
8 relative or household member, or a business with which any of them are associated, if  
9 the financial benefit or avoidance of detriment would not otherwise be available but for  
10 the public official's holding the official position. This provision applies regardless of  
11 whether the public official disclosed an actual or potential conflict of interest. [ORS  
12 244.040(8)]. ORS 244.040(2)(a) provides an exception that permits public officials to  
13 accept any part of an official compensation package without violating ORS 244.040(1).  
14 ORS 244.040(2)(c) provides an exception that permits a public official to accept  
15 reimbursement of expenses without violating ORS 244.040(1).

16  
17 The term "official compensation package" is defined as the wages and other benefits  
18 provided to a public official. To be part of a public official's "official compensation  
19 package," the wages and benefits must have been specifically approved by the public  
20 body in a formal manner, such as through a union contract, an employment contract, or  
21 other adopted personnel policies that apply generally to employees or other public  
22 officials. The term also includes the direct payment of a public official's expenses by the  
23 public body, in accordance with the public body's policies. [OAR 199-008-0005(3)].

24  
25 The term "reimbursement of expenses" is defined to mean the payment by a public  
26 body to a public official serving that public body, of expenses incurred in the conduct of  
27 official duties on behalf of the public body. Any such repayment must comply with any  
28 applicable laws and policies governing the eligibility of such repayment. [OAR 199-008-  
29 0005(4)].

30  
31 ORS 198.190 authorizes the "governing body" of a special district to provide  
32 "reimbursement of a member for actual and reasonable traveling and other expenses

1 necessarily incurred by a member in performing official duties.” The District could  
2 choose to implement this statutory authority through adoption of a Board policy.  
3 Alternatively, each individual member, after traveling, could submit their request for  
4 reimbursement to the Board (after declaring an actual conflict) and have the Board vote  
5 on the reimbursement request from that individual member. It does not appear that the  
6 Board has a Board travel policy that applies to Board Members. The CWS travel policy  
7 appears to only apply to employees.

8  
9 The Washington County travel policy states that County officials, including elected  
10 officials, are subject to the policy while traveling on County business; however, when  
11 Jerry Willey traveled to the 2024 IWA Conference, it appears that he was traveling on  
12 CWS business, not County business. Therefore, it does not appear that County policy  
13 applies to his CWS travel. As a special district under Oregon law, CWS is a separate  
14 legal entity from the County, with its own governing body. Therefore, it appears only the  
15 CWS policies apply when CWS Board Directors are traveling on CWS business.

16  
17 It appears CWS does not have a travel policy applicable to Board Members, does not  
18 have compensation agreements with the Board Members, nor does CWS compensate  
19 Board Members directly for their Board service. If this case moves to investigation, the  
20 Commission would need to determine whether Jerry Willey was authorized to be  
21 reimbursed for travel under OAR 199-008-0005(4) which requires “[a]ny such  
22 repayment [of expenses] must comply with any applicable laws and policies governing  
23 the eligibility of such repayment.” In this instance ORS 198.190 authorizes the  
24 “governing body” that is the Board to authorize reimbursement of expenses for CWS  
25 Board Members. Given that it does not appear the Board adopted a travel policy  
26 applicable to Board Directors, nor does it appear that Jerry Willey presented his  
27 requests for reimbursement to the Board to be approved, it appears Jerry Willey may  
28 have used his position to gain a financial benefit without authorization by law. Given the  
29 unknown nature of the reimbursement process, additional information is needed to  
30 determine if Jerry Willey used his official position to gain reimbursement of expenses  
31 without legal authority from the Board.

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1 The information available in this preliminary review indicates that Jerry Willey traveled  
2 on behalf of CWS, in his role as CWS Board Member to attend the 2024 International  
3 Water Conference in Toronto, Canada and the 2024 WEFTEC in New Orleans,  
4 Louisiana. The information indicates that Jerry Willey was reimbursed for economy  
5 round trip flights to Toronto and New Orleans. The information also indicates that Jerry  
6 Willey included his personal frequent flyer number on his airline reservation to obtain  
7 the personal benefit of frequent flyer rewards. Frequent flyer rewards do not appear to  
8 be included in Jerry Willey's official compensation package. Because the information  
9 appears to indicate that Jerry Willey received frequent flyer rewards by including his  
10 personal rewards number on flights for CWS business, it appears that he may have  
11 received a financial benefit which would not have been available to him but for his  
12 official position. Thus, it appears that he may have violated ORS 244.040(1).

13  
14 Based on the information available, it appears that Jerry Willey may have used his  
15 official position as a CWS Board Member to obtain a personal financial benefit of  
16 frequent flyer rewards when he booked a flight for CWS business. Because that benefit  
17 was not included in his official compensation package, it appears that he may have  
18 violated ORS 244.040(1).

#### 19 20 Conflict of Interest

21 A conflict of interest means any action, decision, or recommendation by a person acting  
22 in their capacity as a public official, the effect of which would be (actual conflict of  
23 interest) or could be (potential conflict of interest) to the private financial benefit or  
24 detriment of the person, their relative, or a business with which they or their relative are  
25 associated. [ORS 244.020(1) and ORS 244.020(13)].

26  
27 When met with a conflict of interest, an elected public official, such as Jerry Willey, must  
28 make a public announcement of the nature of the conflict of interest. If met with a  
29 potential conflict of interest, this announcement must be made prior to taking any action  
30 on the matter in the capacity of a public official. If met with an actual conflict of interest,  
31 the public official must make the public announcement and then refrain from  
32 participating as a public official in any discussion, debate or vote on the matter out of

1 which the actual conflict of interest arises, unless their vote is necessary to meet a  
2 minimum vote requirement, in which case the public official may vote but may not  
3 participate in any discussion or debate on the matter. [ORS 244.120(2)]. As noted  
4 above, ORS 198.190 authorizes “the governing body” of CWS to choose to reimburse  
5 members for reasonable travel. Given the unknown nature of the reimbursement  
6 process, additional information is needed to determine if Jerry Willey disclosed conflicts  
7 of interest when seeking reimbursement.

8  
9 As noted above, it appears that Jerry Willey, acting in his role as a CWS Board  
10 Member, traveled to the Toronto, Canada and New Orleans, Louisiana in 2024. It  
11 appears that Jerry Willey may have included his personal frequent flyer number to earn  
12 traveler rewards when he arranged flights for CWS business. The information does not  
13 indicate that Jerry Willey disclosed his conflicts of interest. Thus, it appears that Jerry  
14 Willey may have failed to comply with the conflict of interest disclosure requirements in  
15 ORS 244.120(2).

16  
17 Based on the information available in this preliminary review, there appears to be a  
18 substantial, objective basis to believe that Jerry Willey may have violated the prohibited  
19 use of office provisions and the conflict of interest provisions in Oregon Government  
20 Ethics Law.

21  
22 The Government Ethics Commission should move to investigate whether Jerry Willey  
23 may have violated ORS 244.040(1) and ORS 244.120(2). (Motion 4).

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**ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS:**

- #PR1 Original Complaint received 6/24/2025
- #PR2 Clean Water Services Board of Directors accessed 7/8/2025
- #PR3 Willey Jerry CWS AP Invoice Distributions by Vendor received 7/7/2025
- #PR4 CWS Travel Policy effective 3/1/2012
- #PR5 Washington County Travel Policy amended 5/18/2021
- #PR6 Memo of Phone Call with Tanya Ange on 8/6/2025
- #PR7 Memo of Phone Call With Jerry Willey on 8/4/2025
- #PR8 Jerry Willey Toronto IWA Conference Travel Documents submitted 9/17/2024
- #PR9 Jerry Willey New Orleans Travel Documents received 8/8/2025

PREPARED BY *Joshua J. Sullivan*, Investigator  8/21/2025

APPROVED BY *Susan V. Myers*, Executive Director  8/21/2025

REVIEWED BY *Sean T. Brady*, Senior Assistant Attorney General Authorized on 8/21/2025