

**Clintonville Area Commission Election Committee Decision
Complaint of District 3 Candidate Joel Ronschke filed August 24, 2025**

I. Background

a. Election Committee Intervention to Enforce Restricted Zone – Early Voting Day 08/19/25

At approximately 6:40pm on August 19, 2025, Early Voting Day, District 3 Commissioner candidate Jordan Ticknor entered the polling room (having voted a few minutes previously) and asked Sarah Snyder and Melissa Doll, the two Election Committee members covering the polls, if it was ok to “campaign” near the front entrance because she has just witnessed Will Klatt doing so. Chair Doll pulled up the applicable Election Rule on her laptop and walked outside to discuss the situation with Will Klatt. She approached him from behind and observed that he was standing in a prominent location about 20 feet straight out from the front entrance of the polling place. Based on his positioning and demeanor, her immediate impression was that he had stationed himself there to engage with voters. She did not observe him handing out flyers or notice any flyers, although this would not be inconsistent with what she observed in terms his positioning and demeanor. Chair Doll showed Will Klatt the applicable election rule on her laptop and told him he needed to move out to at least 100 feet away from the entrance. He was cordial, acknowledged being within the restricted zone, and said he would leave rather than move farther out. Chair Doll returned to the polling room at 6:45pm. She went back outside shortly thereafter to make sure Will Klatt was not within the restricted zone and did not see him on the premises.

b. Joel Ronschke’s Complaint

On August 24, 2025, the Election Committee received a formal complaint from District 3 Commissioner candidate Joel Ronschke seeking disqualification of Will Klatt as a District 3 Commissioner candidate based on the allegation that he engaged in campaigning activity for approximately 45 minutes on Early Voting Day by distributing campaigning and distributing flyers at or near the entrance of the polling place during voting hours, in violation of Election Rule VI(G), which states:

No person shall engage in any campaigning within 100 feet of the entrance of the building used by voters at the polling place during the time the poll is open on Election Day

Joel Ronschke asserted that this alleged conduct gave Will Klatt "an advantage to gain additional votes to win election by means not in compliance with election rules. This is an example of not understanding and following the clearly stated rules and is not acceptable for a CAC Commissioner."

See Attachment 1 for a copy of the complaint and other relevant communication.

c. Will Klatt’s Response to Joel Ronschke’s Complaint

Will Klatt provided the following explanation in response to Joel Ronschke’s complaint, in pertinent part:

- He stopped “canvassing” after Chair Doll approached him about being in the restricted zone.
- He canvassed for “about an hour in an area that [he] believed to be with in compliance but upon hearing from [Chair Doll] that [he] must be an additional 20-30 or so feet further [he] stopped.”
- He believes he “talked to a total of 6-8 people during that hour,” among them:
 - Two candidates - one with their partner
 - One neighbor
 - Two friends of one of the other candidates
 - Two people he did not know
- He did not intend to be in the restricted zone and stopped upon being notified of the issue by Chair Doll.
- The perimeter of the restricted zone was not marked “so there was no real way to know where the line was.”
- “There was no intent to violate a campaign rule nor should this disqualify [him] or any other candidate.”

See Attachment 2 for a copy of the full response.

II. Findings

Following a review of the complaint, Will Klatt’s statement in response to the complaint, and available evidence, the Election Committee finds the following:

1. Early Voting Day was Tuesday, August 19, 2025, with voting hours between 6-8pm.
2. A total of 28 District 3 residents cast a vote on Early Voting Day.
3. Election Day was Saturday, August 23, 2025, with voting hours between 10am – 2pm.
4. A total of 96 District 3 residents cast a vote on Election Day.
5. The uncertified election results are:
 - Tom Albanese: 21
 - Will Klatt: 59
 - Joel Ronschke: 18
 - Jordan Ticknor: 26
6. Will Klatt engaged in campaigning activity at the polling place entrance on Early Voting Day between approximately 6pm – 6:45pm, other than when he was inside the polling area casting his vote.
7. Will Klatt’s campaigning activity occurred within the 100-foot restricted area, as defined by Election Rule VI(G).
8. Will Klatt’s campaigning activity at least took the form of talking to potential voters, which he acknowledges doing. Whether he also handed out flyers is not material under the facts and circumstances, as talking to potential voters and handing out flyers each constitute Election Rule violations when conducted with the 100-foot restricted area. Further, talking to potential voters can be viewed as a more serious than handing out flyers, a more passive activity, due to its potential to influence voter behavior more directly.
9. Will Klatt talked to approximately 8 potential voters.

10. Will Klatt was cordial, acknowledged being in the restricted area, and left the restricted area upon being asked to move by Chair Doll.
11. No evidence was presented indicating that voters were obstructed, intimidated, or prevented from casting their ballots.
12. The boundary of the restricted zone was not marked. Election Rules did not require it to be marked (by contrast, the Ohio Revised Code requires a restricted zone boundary to be marked for state and federal elections).
13. Will Klatt did not appear to violate intentionally the restricted zone for campaigning activity.

III. Considerations

The Election Committee recognizes that campaigning within a restricted zone is in violation of Election Rule VI(G). However, disqualification of a candidate is a serious remedy that overrides the will of voters. Accordingly, it must meet the following criteria:

- The violation must be intentional and egregious.
- The conduct must materially affect the integrity or outcome of the election.
- The candidate at issue must be afforded due process, including notice and an opportunity to respond.

IV. Decision

Based on the above findings and considerations, the Election Committee hereby rules:

- The conduct of Will Klatt constituted a technical violation of Election Rule VI(G).
- However, the violation does not warrant disqualification.
 - There is no evidence that the violation was intended to undermine the election process.
 - There is no evidence that the violation resulted in voter obstruction, intimidation or suppression.
 - The violation did not materially affect the integrity or outcome of the election
 - Based on his statement, Will Klatt interacted with about 8 potential voters while campaigning in the restricted zone. Assuming these efforts swayed all 8 people to vote in his favor, and subtracting those 8 votes from his total and reassigning them to Joel Ronschke – Will Klatt would still have won the election by a wide margin:
 - Tom Albanese - 21
 - Will Klatt -51
 - Joel Ronschke - 26
 - Jordan Ticknor - 26
 - Will Klatt would still have won the election by a wide margin even if the 8 votes were subtracted from his total and reassigned to each of the other candidates in turn.
- While not warranting disqualification, the technical violation does call for the Election Committee to admonish Will Klatt to be aware of all Bylaws and Election Rules.

- The Election Committee will recommend changes to the Election Rules for 2026 to include enforcement protocols for Section VI(G) for future elections, including marking and monitoring the restricted zone boundary.

V. Conclusion

The Election Committee affirms the election results and declines to disqualify Will Klatt.

This Election Committee decision is final unless appealed to the Chair of the Clintonville Area Commission in writing within three (3) days of the decision.

Appeal Instructions:

This decision may be appealed to the Chair of the Clintonville Area Commission within three (3) days of the decision. Accordingly, the deadline to file an appeal is Wednesday, September 3, 2025.

To file an appeal, submit a written notice including:

- The name of the appellant
- The ground for appeal
- A copy of this decision

Appeals must be submitted to Brittany Boulton, Chair, Clintonville Area Commission, at the following email address:

Email: brittanyforclintonville@gmail.com

Failure to file within the deadline may result in dismissal of the appeal.

Respectfully,

Melissa Doll
Chair, Election Committee
Clintonville Area Commission
On behalf of the Election Committee

Dated: August 31, 2025

Attachment 1

From: **Joel Ronschke** <joelronschke@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Aug 25, 2025 at 10:38 AM
Subject: CAC Election Results - District 3: Formal Complaint
To: Melissa Doll <dcm8694@gmail.com>

Melissa,

Good morning. Please confirm this email will serve as my formal complaint.

I seek the disqualification of CAC District 3 Commissioner candidate Will Klatt for campaigning approximately 45 minutes at a distance less than 100 ft from the entrance of Whetstone Library on 8/19, I direct violation of Bylaw section below:

Section VII(G) of the CAC Election Rules states: "No person shall engage in any campaigning within 100 feet of the entrance of the building used by voters at the polling place during the time the poll is open on Election Day."

I feel this has provided him an advantage to gain additional votes to win election by means not in compliance with election rules. This is an example of not understanding and following the clearly stated rules and is not acceptable for a CAC Commissioner.

Respectfully,
Joel Ronschke

From: **Joel Ronschke** <joelronschke@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Aug 24, 2025 at 3:25 PM
Subject: Re: CAC Election Results - District 3
To: Melissa Doll <dcm8694@gmail.com>

My wife and I both witnessed Will Klatt campaigning and handing out flyers less than 100ft from the library entrance at early voting on 8/19.

Is there a formal process for filing a complaint?

Thanks!
Joel Ronschke

Attachment 2

From: **Will Klatt** <will.b.klatt@gmail.com>
Date: Sat, Aug 30, 2025 at 2:14 PM
Subject: Re: Request for Response to Campaigning Complaint
To: Melissa Doll <dcm8694@gmail.com>

Hi Melissa,

As discussed with you, I stopped canvassing upon our discussion during early vote. Which I did for about an hour in an area that I believed to be within compliance but upon hearing from you that I must be an additional 20-30 or so feet further I stopped. I believe I talked to a total of 6-8 people during that hour. Two of which were candidates one was with their partner, one of which were my neighbors and two of which were friends of one of the other candidates and two people of which I did not know.

It wasn't my intent to be within the 100 feet perimeter and when informed by you that I was within the 100 feet I stopped. The election committee did not set up a perimeter so there was no real way to know where the line was. I immediately complied once I was informed. There was no intent to violate a campaign rule nor should this disqualify me or any other candidate.

There is no way this misunderstanding of where the line was could have any bearing on the outcome of the election in any meaningful way.

Joel may be upset he lost the election after receiving 18 out of 124 votes but any attempt to upend the popular vote would be a grave disservice to both Clintonville community and the Clintonville Area Commission.

Please let me know any timeline related to reviewing a decision so I can make the appropriate communications to the neighborhood via Facebook and so I can use my union negotiated benefit to legal consultations through my employer to address any attempt to disenfranchise candidates or voters in this election.

Best,

Will Klatt.

From: **Melissa Doll** <dcm8694@gmail.com>
Date: Sat, Aug 30, 2025 at 4:02 PM
Subject: Re: Request for Response to Campaigning Complaint
To: Will Klatt <will.b.klatt@gmail.com>

Will,

Thank you for your prompt reply and statement.

We have a follow up question for you: Can you please clarify whether your canvassing included handing out flyers?

Regarding your questions in your email and text:

The Election Committee reviews complaints between August 30 - September 3. The Election Committee will issue a decision on the pending complaint by September 3. Any appeals by candidates must be submitted in writing to the CAC Chair within 3 days of the Election Committee decision. Appeals will be considered at the next CAC meeting.

Attached per your request are the communications with Joel Ronschke on this matter to date.

I will send you a copy of the Election Committee's decision as soon as we finalize it.

Best regards,

Melissa Doll
Chair, CAC Election Committee

From: **Will Klatt** <will.b.klatt@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Aug 31, 2025 at 2:13 PM
Subject: Re: Request for Response to Campaigning Complaint
To: Melissa Doll <dcm8694@gmail.com>

Thank you Melissa,

I'm by no means frustrated with CAC or the elections committee. You are fulfilling your responsibility to investigate and make rulings under the charter.

My frustration relates to attempts to invalidate a free and fair election based on my misunderstanding of where the line is. For future elections it might be worth placing a flag or cone to make it clear to candidates where the line is. Otherwise it's impossible for a candidate to know where the line is, and making a mistake on that front when no line is clearly demarcated is no means grounds for disqualifying a candidate.

When you informed me I was wrong where the line was I immediately stopped. there was no intent to violate a rule and I corrected it immediately. In addition there is no way this mistake on my part could have altered the outcome of this election. Had a mistake, misunderstanding or intentional violation had the ability to change the outcome of the election I would fully understand disqualifying a candidate or rerunning the election, however this was clearly not the case. The outcome of the election was overwhelmingly clear. I will continue to defend my neighbors right to elect the CAC commissioner of their choosing for this ward.

Best regards,

Will