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Mailers in Pittsford violate fair campaign pledge

[David Andreatta](#), @david_andreatta Published 11:48 a.m. ET Oct. 30, 2017 | Updated 8:38 p.m. ET Oct. 30, 2017

This article has been modified to reflect that the mailer in question was produced by the candidates' campaign. An earlier version reported that the mailer was produced by the New York State Democratic Committee. The committee only paid for the postage.

An election watchdog group has found that a mailer for two Democratic candidates for Pittsford Town Board violated the candidates' pledge to campaign "accurately and honestly."

The Fair Election Practices Committee ruled Friday that the mailer for candidates Kevin Beckford and Stephanie Townsend violated the pledge by suggesting that Pittsford Town Board meetings routinely run short, town administrative salaries have spiked and details about a major public project were hidden from voters.

Specifically, the mailer asserted that "Pittsford town meetings last less than 25 minutes," "administrative salaries have gone up 44 percent" over seven years, and "significant details about how the (Spiegel Community Center) would be used were not shared until months after" voters agreed to fund improvements to the center.

[Beckford and Townsend released a joint statement](#) Monday saying they stand behind the claims in their literature but acknowledge their assertions could have been better cited.

"We value the integrity of elections and entered the 2017 Town Board race committed to running honest and fact-based issues campaigns," their statement read in part, "and we continue to live up to that goal in spirit and practice."

The Fair Elections Practices Committee is named by the League of Women Voters/Rochester Metro Area and The Interfaith Alliance of Rochester, and consists of a panel of four voting members, who are composed of an equal number of enrolled Democrats and Republicans.

Signing what is known as the committee's "Fair Campaign Pledge" has been a custom of most candidates running for local office for years.

Those who sign the pledge promise, among other things, to conduct their campaigns "accurately and honestly," refrain from mudslinging, and "repudiate any individual or groups whose activities on my campaign's behalf — directly or indirectly — violate" the pledge.

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