



**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Ethics Board  
**SUBJECT:** Ethics Board Report on Ethics Complaint 2025-13  
**DATE:** June 12, 2025

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Between March 19 and April 16, 2025, the following 22 individuals (“Complainants”) filed separate complaints alleging violation of various combinations of six subsections of the code of ethics by Mayor Lily Wu (“Respondent” or “Mayor”):

Margaret Allen	McKenna Maher
Beverly Baumgartner	Amanda Mogoi
Emily Brosz	Laura Olds
Nicole Brown	Andrea Palacio
Rhashanna Jasmine Grant	Lisa Kilmer
Mattea Grewing	Helen Riecher
Maurice Harden	Rachel Roth
Kieran Rai Ibsen	Joshua Saxe
Doug Ittner	Madalyn (Maddie) Shriver
Katie Keefover	Destiney Soyez
Ryan Keefover	Natalie Tos-Brightup

Any additional complaint forms received but not listed above were missing key information and thus not considered valid complaints. In compliance with Ordinance 52-549, our report is as follows:

### **1. Summary of Complaint**

Summarized, Complainants allege Respondent mishandled the execution of a proclamation declaring Transgender Day of Visibility (“the proclamation”) at the City Council meeting on March 18, 2025. The proclamation did not display the Mayor’s signature, and the Mayor did not read the proclamation aloud at the meeting. Two other proclamations presented at that meeting included the Mayor’s signature and were read by the Mayor.

Complainants allege Respondent violated six sections of the Ethics Ordinance requiring city officials to (a) be dedicated to the ideals of honor and integrity, (b) conduct themselves to maintain public confidence, (e) refrain from actions unreasonably benefitting specific individuals or groups at the expense of the city as a whole, (g) address constituents’ needs, striving to provide the highest level of service with equity without discriminating against any citizen, (h) work in full cooperation with other officials and employees, and (r) remain impartial.

## **2. Scope of Investigation**

The written Complaints, the Mayor's Response, and their attached documents were reviewed. Videos of City Council meetings were reviewed, and multiple witnesses were interviewed.

## **3. Summary of Facts**

The Complainants allege Mayor Lily Wu violated the code of ethics at the City Council meeting on March 18, 2025. Twenty complainants focused on the Mayor's failure to sign the proclamation, while six of those also specifically cited the Mayor not reading the proclamation aloud.

In their complaints, several individuals stated these actions have "shaken the confidence of the public in the discharge of [Respondent's] duties," are "discriminating against an at-risk minority," "publicly disrespected a protected part of our community under the Wichita Non-Discrimination Ordinance," were "selectively excluding a marginalized group while signing proclamations for others," "let her own opinions sway her from doing her job," and refused "to preside as she has during any other official duties."

### **Summary of Mayor Lily Wu's Response**

The Respondent asserts that she has a right not to vote on matters before the Council, and she exercised that right by not voting for the subject Proclamation. Since she did not vote in favor of the Proclamation, she extended an offer to read it to council members who voted in its favor.

She says it is false that she refused to sign it, being as surprised as everyone else during the meeting when the document did not have her electronic signature on it. She handed her edits to staff, which did not include crossing out her signature, and she did not request her signature be removed. She later discovered that her Assistant took the draft and crossed her name off, then gave it to the staff who handles the creating of proclamations.

A meeting was held March 24, 2025 with the City Manager, Executive Assistant to the City Manager, and the two staff members involved.

The Mayor declined to respond to the allegation that she violated City Code 2.04.030 ("The Mayor shall preside at all meetings of the city council...") because this code is not a part of the Code of Ethics. She said there was no conversation or confrontation in which she was asked to read the proclamation and said she would not do so.

Highly summarized, the Mayor addressed the specific Ethics Ordinance subsections as follows:

(a) She acted with honor and integrity.

(b) She did not fail to conduct herself "so as to maintain public confidence in the City and its officials." She did not vote for a Proclamation unpopular with her constituents. A clerical error was made in failing to include her signature on the final version.

(e) This section is not relevant and deals with "expenditures" and is focused on avoiding expenditures which benefit only specific individuals at the expense of the city as a whole.

(g) She did not refuse to sign, and this provision does not fit the factual allegations

(h) This provision is not applicable. She alleges it requires officials to refrain from correcting municipal code violations, and not interfering with the work of city employees, including traffic tickets.

(r) This section addresses City business, policies, contracts and undue influence. Proclamations are not policy, so this section is irrelevant.

The Mayor argues it is not the role of the Ethics Board to determine whether policy positions or procedural actions taken meet the expectations of constituents.

### **Witness Interviews**

On January 22, 2025, the City Council office received a proclamation request for Transgender Day of Visibility in March. The Administrative Assistant in the City Council Office sent an email to Council members that day and later sent reminders asking them to review and vote. Over the next several weeks, Council members voted as follows:

Maggie Ballard	Approved
Brandon Johnson	Approved
Dalton Glasscock	Did not vote
J.V. Johnston	No
Michael H. Hoheisel	Approved
Becky Tuttle	Approved
Lily Wu	Did not vote

Three proclamations were planned for the March 18 meeting, including the proclamation at issue. The Administrative Assistant printed all three, placed them in a folder for review and return to her, and put the folder in the usual place for the Mayor. She did not receive edits back until Monday March 17, 2025.

Another staff member, the Special Assistant to the Mayor, said she received edits from the Mayor for the two other proclamations on Friday, March 14, but not the one regarding Transgender Day of Visibility. A red pen was used for making edits to the other two. The Mayor's Assistant met with the Mayor on Monday March 17 about various things, including the Transgender Day of Visibility proclamation. The Mayor handed her the Mayor's edits while working on her computer.

The Mayor's Assistant asked the Mayor something like "so you don't want your name on this?" The Assistant read aloud the part of the proclamation that said "be it resolved" which the Mayor had edited to remove her name. She asked again "so you don't want your name on this?" The Mayor said "no." While standing in front of the Mayor, the Assistant then crossed the Mayor's name off the bottom where the electronic signature goes. The Assistant does not know if the Mayor saw her cross out the Mayor's name at the bottom in the signature area. The Mayor was still in the office when she did it. They were both standing. The Mayor's Assistant demonstrated to the investigator how she was holding the proclamation, suggesting it was possible the Mayor did not see. The Assistant used a black pen. She also re-crossed off a couple of things already crossed off by the Mayor.

The Mayor's Assistant walked over to the Administrative Assistant, gave her the edits, and said the Mayor does not want her name on it. At some point, the Administrative Assistant said something like "the mayor can do what she wants." The Mayor's Assistant does not recall what was said between her and the Administrative Assistant specifically about the Mayor's signature. The Administrative Assistant may have asked what happens when there is no name. The Administrative Assistant says the Mayor's Assistant told her the Mayor instructed her to remove the Mayor's name and signature from the Transgender Day of Visibility proclamation. She noted that edits had been made in black pen, including removing the Mayor's name from both of the two places where it routinely appears on proclamations: the body of the proclamation and the signature line. The Mayor's Assistant said she was not sure why the Mayor requested this.

The Administrative Assistant reached out to Assistant City Manager Donte Martin (Martin), because her direct boss was gone, due to the unusual nature of the changes. Martin said March 17 was when he first heard of the transgender day proclamation issue. Via text, Martin asked the Administrative Assistant what her concerns were about, and the Administrative Assistant wrote "Mayor not wanting to sign a proclamation... I've never had that happen before?" He responded that he was meeting with Bob (Robert Layton) at 10:30 and assumes the Vice Mayor is unwilling to sign also, and the Administrative Assistant replied, "yes." Martin tells the Administrative Assistant it would help to have a copy and asks "She revised it but won't sign?" He says the Administrative Assistant did not respond.

Martin then met with Troy Anderson, who is the other Assistant City Manager, and City Manager Robert Layton the morning of March 17 in a regularly scheduled meeting. He provided the edits from the Administrative Assistant to discuss. Layton's response was that this was a City Council process and follow the directions from the Mayor's Assistant and the Mayor. Martin identified the original edits from the Mayor's Assistant that had the signature crossed off as the document provided to Layton. Martin and Layton stated no one in that meeting reached out to the Mayor while in the meeting for clarification or instructions or anything else. Martin said there was no communication between any of the three and the Mayor during the meeting. Martin had no further discussions about the Mayor wanting her signature taken off.

The first that Robert Layton heard of issues with the proclamation was March 17. He was notified there may be issues with the proclamation before the above meeting. During the meeting, he said while the signature was crossed off, they primarily discussed the issue of who would read it, and there was little discussion about lack of signature.

He confirmed he advised Martin to follow directions of the Mayor's Assistant and the Mayor, to follow the City Council's process. He did not communicate with the Mayor about it until March 19 when he received an email. In the email, the Mayor asks him to set up a meeting with himself and other staff members to discuss "the mistake of leaving my signature off the Transgender Day proclamation and clarify and improve the process going forward." The Mayor says her "edits did not include signature removal. My signature should be added as generally required for proclamations passed by majority Council vote."

The Administrative Assistant finalized the changes to all three final proclamations, and put them in the normal folder and arranged them under the Presentation List in the following order:

1. Transgender Day of Visibility
2. Developmental Disability Awareness Month
3. Into the Light Day

She placed the finalized proclamations in the same spot she usually does, which is where she says people can review them, which they sometimes do while they are there. The proclamations sat there from March 17 until they were picked up before the March 18 evening meeting. The Administrative Assistant said, “[l]ater that afternoon Mayor Wu reviewed the final documents at my desk and thanked me.” No other witnesses observed the Mayor reviewing the final version without signature.

One witness said the Administrative Assistant told her that the Mayor came to her Monday before the Tuesday meeting and thanked her for the changes. She could not say that the Mayor thanked her for changing the signature part. Multiple witnesses commented on how meticulous the Mayor usually is about edits and referenced her journalism background.

Later on Monday, March 17, the Administrative Assistant came to the Mayor’s Assistant and asked about reading the proclamation and in what order. The issue was raised about the Mayor possibly not going to read it. The Mayor’s Assistant went to the Mayor and asked whether she would be reading the transgender day proclamation in the Council meeting.

The Mayor was interested in how the Administrative Assistant had information about whether she was reading it. The Mayor’s Assistant said the Administrative Assistant said she heard this from “upstairs” and was advised one of the Management Fellows (a temporary employment position similar to an intern) would have to read it if a council member would not because the City Clerk was gone. The Mayor said something about offering the reading to someone who voted for it. The Mayor’s Assistant also asked the Mayor if they were switching the presentation order of the proclamations which they did.

The Mayor’s Assistant confirmed the final proclamations are routinely left sitting near the Administrative Assistant’s desk if someone wanted to review them. She did not see anyone review this time. The Mayor’s Assistant typically grabs the proclamations just before meetings, puts them in order, opens them, gives them to the Mayor, and asks her if she wants to review them, but says the Mayor did not want to review them this time. Sometimes the Mayor reads over things to prepare. That Tuesday they were particularly busy, and the Mayor’s Assistant listed the various events they attended that day leading up to the meeting. She does not know who knew or did not know the Mayor was not going to read the proclamation.

The supervisor over the Mayor’s Assistant did not see the Mayor’s Assistant “arbitrarily” make edits to a proclamation and was not present when the Mayor’s Assistant said she made edits. The supervisor said no one knew proclamations were required to be signed by the Mayor until after this event. The Mayor’s Assistant told her supervisor that she explicitly asked the Mayor if she wanted her name removed from the proclamation, and the Mayor said yes, and that the Mayor’s Assistant crossed off where the signature would be while she was in front of the Mayor.

The supervisor does not know if the Mayor saw her Assistant cross off the signature. The supervisor had a subsequent conversation with the Mayor’s Assistant where they were talking about the edits and what they meant, and the supervisor told the Mayor’s Assistant that there was a difference in removing a name from the body of the proclamation and removing a signature block from the bottom. This seemed to be a “light bulb” moment for the Mayor’s Assistant as if she were learning this distinction for the first time.

Council Member Becky Tuttle advised that the Mayor informed her on March 13 that she has a new policy that proclamations read during council meetings held in the evening can be read by council members, which was not previously her policy. Tuttle was asked to read and declined

reading the transgender day proclamation at the March 18 meeting. Council Member Mike Hoheisel said the Mayor asked him in advance of the meeting to read the proclamation, and he declined. Council Member Brandon Johnson reported that the Mayor asked him on March 14 to read the proclamation. He declined. Council Member Maggie Ballard said the Mayor did not ask her in advance of the meeting to read the proclamation during the meeting.

Council Member Brandon Johnson had conversations with Council Members Ballard and Hoheisel about the reading of the proclamation, primarily. Johnson did not have a precise date, but it was sometime prior to the meeting. They did not think it would be right to have staff read the proclamation and that a council member needed to read it. Johnson thinks that the three of them (Johnson, Ballard, and Hoheisel) discussed that if it is not signed it would just be blank. He confirmed that Manager Layton reached out to him, he thinks the afternoon of Tuesday, March 18, because he had heard about issues with the proclamation, and the three of them had been talking about that. Layton told the three of them this is a council issue, and he wanted to keep staff people out of it. Layton said it is up to the council to figure out how to deal with it.

Ballard said that “they” were going to have a Fellow (a temporary employee who was sitting in for the City Clerk at this particular council meeting) read the proclamation. She could not say who “they” were or who told her that. But she said it was not the Fellow’s job, and it needed to be a council member. She told Johnson that if the Mayor will not read it, she was prepared to read it. Ballard ended up reading and signing the proclamation during the meeting.

There were multiple meetings and discussions after the March 18 council meeting. No witnesses or evidence established that the Mayor subsequently admitted to asking for her signature to be removed. Subsequent to March 18, a new electronically signed version of the proclamation with the Mayor’s electronic signature was created but not issued.

#### **4. Applicable Section(s) of the Code of Ethics**

The Ethics Ordinance Section 3 (a-r) lists the ethical requirements of City officials. Complainants allege Respondent violated the following six sections:

- a. Be dedicated to the ideals of honor and integrity in all public and personal relationships.
- b. Conduct themselves so as to maintain public confidence in the City and its officials.
- e. Ensure that expenditures made by the City are in the interest of the City, for the betterment of the City, and only for appropriate City business, and refrain from actions unreasonably benefiting specific individuals or groups at the expense of the city as a whole.
- g. Address constituents’ concerns and needs, striving to provide the highest level of service with equity, neither granting special favor nor discriminating against any citizen.
- h. Work in full cooperation with other officials and employees as they carry out the lawful discharge of their duties, unless prohibited by law or recognized confidentiality of material, to perform the operations of government, and refrain from requesting correction of any municipal code violation beyond the proper process, including but not limited to the fixing of traffic tickets.
- r. Remain impartial in the consideration of the City’s business, including the approval of public policies and awarding of contracts. Do not be unduly influenced by family relationships, business interests or religious affiliation in the formulation or adoption of rules, regulations, ordinances, resolutions, or other policy matters.

## **5. Findings of the Ethics Board**

### **Section a. Be dedicated to the ideals of honor and integrity in all public and personal relationships.**

According to dictionary definitions, “honor” could mean “adherence to what is right or to a conventional standard of conduct” or “one whose worth brings respect.” “Integrity” might mean “firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values; implies trustworthiness and incorruptibility to a degree that one is incapable of being false to a trust, responsibility, or pledge.” The Ethics Board does not find violation of this section.

### **Section b. Conduct themselves so as to maintain public confidence in the City and its officials.**

The second claim requires a finding that Respondent violated the requirement of maintaining public confidence in her job performance or the City and its officials. The Ethics Board finds the evidence did not rise to the level of violating this provision.

### **Section e. Ensure that expenditures made by the City are in the interest of the City, for the betterment of the City, and only for appropriate City business, and refrain from actions unreasonably benefiting specific individuals or groups at the expense of the city as a whole.**

The Ethics Board finds the evidence did not rise to the level of violating this provision, and this provision arguably does not apply to the present Complaints. No claims within the Complaints indicated concerns with expenditures or actions that benefited specific individuals or groups.

### **Section g. Address constituents’ concerns and needs, striving to provide the highest level of service with equity, neither granting special favor nor discriminating against any citizen.**

The Board finds no applicability of Section g to the alleged actions taken on March 18. The scope of work of the Ethics Board in this claim is to assess whether Respondent violated the ethics code, not whether actions taken on the issue of transgender visibility meet the expectations of individual constituents. The Ethics Board makes no judgment about policy matters addressed by legislative bodies at the City. The underlying issue of contention did not influence the Board’s assessment of the alleged violations of the code of ethics.

Allegations about whether the Mayor may have violated the City’s Non-Discrimination Ordinance (NDO) were not addressed by the Ethics Board because the City has provided a different method of lodging and resolving NDO complaints.

### **Section h. Work in full cooperation with other officials and employees as they carry out the lawful discharge of their duties, unless prohibited by law or recognized confidentiality of material, to perform the operations of government, and refrain from requesting correction of any municipal code violation beyond the proper process, including but not limited to the fixing of traffic tickets.**

The Board finds only the first part of this provision applicable, where it requires the Mayor to work in full cooperation with other officials and employees to carry out their duties to perform operations of government. While the Ethics Board must evaluate these allegations through the

lens of subsection h, it has considered what it means to work in cooperation with other employees and officials as they carry out their duties to perform the operations of government. For example, the duties of city officers have been defined in part in Wichita City Code 2.04.030, which states:

**The mayor shall be the official head of the city on formal occasions and shall serve as the leader in the activities and duties of the city council.** As the official head of the city, the mayor shall not only lead but shall speak to the aims, policies and programs of the city, but his or her authority is restricted to that of a council member, except as hereinafter while serving as chairman of the council meetings. The mayor shall have no administrative or executive duties but shall refer all such matters to the city manager. **The mayor shall preside at all meetings of the city council, shall sign all resolutions, proclamations, minutes, ordinances, contracts, revenue bonds and other official instruments approved by the city council;** provided that, such documents and instruments may be signed in the manner provided in Section 2.04.035. The mayor shall have no veto power. (emphasis added)

The Mayor did not vote on the proclamation, but she knew a majority of the council voted in the affirmative. She was aware it was on the agenda. She was aware that atypical changes were made to the proclamation, including her request that her name be removed from the body of the document, although there is no direct evidence that she asked for her signature to be removed at the end of the document. The evidence suggests there was a lingering issue as to who was to read the proclamation.

The duty to preside over the council meeting is a fundamental and traditional role of a mayor. Sufficient time existed for the Mayor to fulfill her duty as the official head of the city to prepare for and preside at the council meeting. Presiding routinely includes reading proclamations approved by a majority or making preparations for and arranging in advance for someone else to read them.

Voting in the minority or not voting at all, as in this case, does not change the role of a mayor to execute the will of the majority. Neither lack of understanding of this duty nor inadequate communications with employees and other officials provide sufficient justification for not fulfilling this duty.

The evidence suggests the Mayor did not intend to read this proclamation at the Council meeting and was unsuccessful in making arrangements in advance for a council member to read this proclamation, which constitutes a failure to fulfill her duty to work in full cooperation with other officials and employees to carry out their duties to perform the operations of government.

The Ethics Board therefore finds Respondent violated this subsection.

**Section r. Remain impartial in the consideration of the City's business, including the approval of public policies and awarding of contracts. Do not be unduly influenced by family relationships, business interests or religious affiliation in the formulation or adoption of rules, regulations, ordinances, resolutions, or other policy matters.**



The Ethics Board finds the evidence did not rise to the level of violating this provision, and this provision arguably does not apply to the present Complaints. No claims within the Complaints alleged influence by family, business, or religious interests.

**The Board finds Mayor Lily Wu violated only section (h) of the Code of Ethics. As a result, the Board considered the various options provided in sections (g)(6) and (g)(7) of the ordinance. The Board decided only to provide this written report summarizing findings and making it available to the public.**

#### Next Steps

In compliance with City ordinance and Ethics Board procedures, this report is being provided to the Complainant, Respondent, outside counsel to the Board, City Council, City Attorney, City Manager, City staff liaison to the Board, and City Clerk.

The Complainant and Respondent have seven (7) business days in which to email a response to [Kathy.Sexton@wichita.edu](mailto:Kathy.Sexton@wichita.edu) requesting additional review and stating any specific dispute of the facts or interpretation of the Code of Ethics.

After seven (7) business days, assuming no request for further review is received, the findings become final. If a request is received within seven (7) business days, the issues raised will return to the Ethics Board agenda for reconsideration and a final decision.

In either case, this report shall be posted on the Ethics webpage at <https://www.wichita.gov/895/Ethics-Board>.