

A Concerned Citizen's Call for Accountability

Dear Editor,

As a sixth-generation Bucyrus area resident deeply invested in our community, I am profoundly concerned about recent events involving Mr. Kurt Fankhauser and his company, Wavelinc, LLC, and its relationship with the City of Bucyrus. As previously highlighted in a letter to the editor, Mr. Kurt Fankhauser offers free internet through his business, Wavelinc, LLC, an internet service provider. However, advertised by himself and some of his supporters as a cost-saving measure for the city, this arrangement may be more of a liability and potential legal and ethical issue than it is worth.

First, let's establish some basic facts. Internet service providers (ISPs) like Wavelinc can provide Internet and voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) phone services. But what many people don't realize is what ISPs can access—your search history, video logs, files, and more. ISPs can legally collect and sell this information to third parties for profit.

His actions put citizens' data at risk. As an ISP, Wavelinc can access sensitive information like medical records through the Fire/EMS department, social security numbers, and other personally identifiable information. The citizens of Bucyrus have no guarantee that Mr. Fankhauser will not sell this information to third parties for profit. Mr. Fankhauser's lack of transparency raises severe concerns about the safety and security of our personal information, which should be of utmost importance to all of us.

Without a written agreement, Mr. Fankhauser has become the city's internet and phone service provider. I requested the lease and contract that the city has with Wavelinc and was informed that no written agreement exists. While there are rules from the Ohio Ethics Commission allowing city officials to provide services under certain conditions, it seems Mr. Fankhauser may not have followed these rules. However, what's particularly concerning is that Mr. Fankhauser, despite not following a previous outline of “do's and don'ts” from the Ohio Ethics Commission, has recently chastised another local business for their business dealings with the city, a clear display of hypocrisy that should not be overlooked.

A local print shop attempted to provide t-shirts below market price so that the K-9 fundraiser could charge the same amount for their t-shirts but receive substantially more in profit per shirt. Because a family member was a public servant, Mr. Fankhauser aired his grievance to the law director, saying that it was unethical for them to do business with the city. Because the concern was raised, the print shop elected to no longer be involved in the fundraiser. However, Mr. Fankhauser never consulted the law director about the ethical concerns about his business dealings with the city.

For instance, Mr. Fankhauser installed cameras on public land without proper authorization, and he's benefiting from the city by receiving free services in exchange for his own. It was confirmed with the Bucyrus Police Department that these are not their cameras, and they informed me to “speak to the Mayor's office” if I had any further questions regarding the cameras. Mr. Fankhauser confirmed these were his cameras by advertising them on his Facebook page, Facebook business page, and business website. This violates ethical standards and city regulations. He used his position as Council President to secure a verbal contract with the administration, bypassing the city council's authority.

Moreover, Mr. Fankhauser has been directly involved in discussions that affect his company's financial interests, which is an apparent conflict of interest. He wears his Wavelinc uniform during city council meetings and while he presides in the president's chair. He also commented on his competitors OmniFiber and Brightspeed and suggested ways to slow their permit processing down. He also attempted to sue OmniFiber previously, which further questions his ethical involvement.

To address these issues, I demand that Mr. Fankhauser recuse himself from discussions involving his competitors and stop representing himself as Wavelinc's proprietor during council meetings. All business with Wavelinc should cease until the Ohio Ethics Commission reviews the situation. I also call for any leases to follow the proper procedure of being voted on by the city council and referred to the public lands and buildings committee. Furthermore, I call for a full audit of Wavelinc's operations and financials and a thorough investigation into Mr. Fankhauser's actions. The safety and security of our citizens' data must be ensured, and any violations of ethics, laws, and regulations must be addressed. Suppose my findings are valid, and Mr. Fankhauser is guilty of using our data for personal benefit by getting free rent for his cameras, advertising his donations, and possibly selling our data to third parties. I would then urge the city to file misfeasance charges against Mr. Fankhauser for putting all our data and information at risk and creating a financial liability for the city during economic hardship. If these allegations are true, I demand Mr. Fankhauser resign as City Council President.

Thank you for your attention to these pressing matters. I urge residents to ask their council members questions and attend city council meetings. We cannot allow government officials to go unchecked despite their supposedly transparent platform. The extent of Wavelinc's reach into the city government's dealings is still unclear. I trust that our city officials will take the necessary actions to address these concerns and uphold the integrity of our community.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Slater