

**SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS  
ELECTION COMMISSION**

Contest/Complaint: Jaquelyn Minton

March 12, 2026

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**BACKGROUND**

On March 6, 2026, the Election Commission received a contest filed by Unit One Director Aaron Payment. In his contest per Tribal Code Chapter 10.119, Mr. Payment alleges that Jaquelyn Minton is not eligible to run as a candidate for Tribal election in the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, for violating the Tribal Election Code by campaigning in the 2024 Unit 1 Election without having filed as a non-candidate registrant.

Further, Mr. Payment filed a complaint against Ms. Minton for violating the Tribal Election Code by campaigning in the 2024 Unit 1 Election and for failing to file as a non-candidate registrant.

Mr. Payment did not provide any evidence with his contest/complaint filed.

The contest/complaint requested the following relief:

1. That Jaquelyn Minton be deemed ineligible to run for office in Unit Two.

**ANALYSIS**

The Election Commission requested the Election Commission Attorney pursuant to 10.121(2) on whether the allegations in the contest constitute a violation of this Code. The Election Commission Attorney presented his findings to the Election Commission during the March 12, 2026, meeting.

The relevant code sections to this contest are 10.111, 10.112, 10.120, and 10.121.

10.111(1) To be eligible for election to the Board of Directors or the office of Tribal Chairperson, each Candidate must: (a) be a qualified voter of the Tribe; (b) be 18 years of age or over; (c) comply with Section 10.125; (d) An employee or independent contractor of the Tribe shall voluntarily resign their employment position or surrender any rights under the contract with the tribe; (e) have established residency within the Election Unit they seek to represent at least one year prior to the election; (f) maintain residency within their unit; (h) has not been previously removed from office as a member of the Board of Directors during the previous two general election cycle.

10.112(5)(c) forty (40) valid names, a tribal file number shall be required, address, and signatures of Registered voters if seeking office for members of the Board of Directors for Election Units II, IV, or V.

10.120 All Complaints must be submitted within three (3) months of the occurrence of the conduct alleged to be in violation of the Election Ordinance.

10.121(3) The Election Commission, establishing two categories of Complaints: Administrative Complaints and Campaign Complaints.

- a. Administrative Complaints: shall mean any type of action that is related to filing paperwork with the Election Commission. These types of Complaints can be initiated administratively by a majority vote of the Election Commission outside of the complaints/contest process. Examples of these types of Complaints include missed report filing deadline or failed to place endorsement on an advertisement. The Election Commission shall make the following types of decisions on these types of Complaints:
  - i. Dismiss the Complaint in writing as being without merit, if a Complaint is based on second-hand knowledge, it shall be dismissed as being without merit; or
  - ii. Issue a notice pursuant to the published Sanctions Schedule.
- b. Campaign Complaints: shall mean any type of violation related to campaigning. These types of Complaints can only be initiated by members or candidates through the complaint process. The Election Commission shall make the following types of decisions on these types of Complaints:
  - i. Dismiss the Complaint in writing as being without merit; if a Complaint is based on second-hand knowledge, it shall be dismissed as being without merit; or
  - ii. Convene a hearing on the matter and render a written decision pursuant to subsection (5) of this section.

With the contest/complaint alleging violations of not filing as a non-candidate registrant in the 2024 Election, it will be treated as an Administrative Complaint since it involves paperwork filed with the Election Commission.

The Election Commission is not going to discuss any of the merits of any of the accusations that Mr. Payment made in his complaint against Ms. Minton. During the 2024 Election, Ms. Minton had matters in both the Court of Appeals and the Tribal Court. The Court of Appeals overturned the violation, and the Tribal Court dismissed the complaint filed. Ms. Minton had her day in Court and prevailed on the accusations

against her. It is not the Election Commission's role to relitigate those allegations against her.

Under 10.111 Ms. Minton has met all the qualifications for running for Office. Enrollment has verified that she is a qualified voter of the Tribe, is over 18 years of age, and has resided in Unit 2 for over a year. The documentation has been filed with the Election Commission stating that if elected, she will resign from her job with the Tribe. She has never held a position on the Board of Directors and has thus never been removed from the Board. She submitted Nominating Petitions with at least forty (40) valid signatures to make her eligible under 10.112(5). Further, a person is not deemed ineligible for running for office if they are found to have violated Chapter 10. Anything that happened during the 2024 Election would have no impact on Ms. Minton's eligibility to run for office in 2026.

The 2024 General Election took place on Thursday, June 27, 2024. Chapter 10.120 requires that all complaints must be filed within three months of the conduct alleged to be in violation of the Election Ordinance. The last day on which a complaint for the 2024 Election could have been filed is September 27, 2024. The Election Commission will not consider any complaints filed in respect to the 2024 Election, that window has closed.

The contest/complaint filed by Mr. Payments appears to be based on non-public, confidential information to which he has access only because of his position on the Board of Directors. The Election Commission finds it suspicious that, days after Mr. Payment filed this contest/complaint, confidential attorney-client communications from 2024 concerning the allegations made by Mr. Payment, of which Mr. Payment is one of the few people with access, were anonymously leaked online. Mr. Payment then commented on that anonymous post, "Will someone please post this to my page?" The difference between the allegation filed here and the leaked document is that Mr. Payment fabricated some of the allegations to spin the narrative and paint himself as a victim. Any current or former Board of Directors found to be utilizing confidential information they received due to their position on the Board of Directors to try compromise the integrity of the election could result in a criminal referral under Chapter 71.1103(1)(b) a person commits the offense of election fraud if the person: (b) acts to compromise the integrity of the election or attempts to do so by falsifying any documents, including documents filed with the Tribal Election Committee or Board of Directors.

### FINDINGS

The Election Commission makes the following findings:

1. Based on the contest filed, Jaquelyn Minton meets all the requirements under Chapter 10 to be eligible to run for office in Unit Two.

2. Any complaints related to the 2024 Election have not been timely filed under Chapter 10.120 for consideration by the Election Commission.
3. A referral should be made to Sault Tribe Law Enforcement to investigate the leak of the 2024 confidential attorney-client communications for attempting to compromise the integrity of the election.

**ORDER**

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED, that the Election Commission makes the determination pursuant to 10.121(3)(a)(i) that the contest/complaint filed by Mr. Payment is without merit, and is dismissed.



Election Commission Vice-Chairperson

March 12, 2026

**NOTICE OF APPEAL RIGHTS**

This decision may be appealed to the Tribal Court of Appeals by filing a notice of appeal within five days of receipt of this decision. That appeal shall be governed by Tribal Code Chapter 82 Subchapter II: Appeals from the Election Committee. A notice of appeal must be filed within five (5) business days of the Appellant receiving this order and the publication of this order.