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Bethany Culp
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Fountain Hills, AZ 85268-5941
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Pro Se

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF MARICOPA

BETHANY CULP,)
)
Plaintiff)
)
vs.)
)
)
)
GERRY FRIEDEL, individually and not in)
his capacity as a member of the Town)
Council of the Town of Fountain Hills,)
Arizona.)
)
Defendant.)
_____)

COMPLAINT
JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

I. NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This is a civil action brought by Bethany Culp (“Plaintiff”) seeking injunctive relief, and compensatory and punitive damages against Gerry Friedel (“Defendant”) for defamation per se and defamation. As set out below, on multiple occasions during the period May 10, 2024, through the present, the Defendant has publicly

1 and falsely accused the Plaintiff of making a death threat against the former
2 President of the United States, Donald Trump. From on or about July 26, 2024,
3 Defendant publicly and falsely accused Plaintiff of using artificial intelligence
4 (“AI”) to impersonate him on Facebook to create offensive posts published under
5 his name. During this period defendant also falsely accused Plaintiff of lying and
6 violating campaign finance laws.

7 2. Defendant’s accusations, made with knowledge that they were false or with
8 reckless disregard for their truth or falsity, have damaged Plaintiff’s reputation by
9 branding her as a criminal and impugning her honesty and integrity. Defendant’s
10 false accusations have further damaged Plaintiff by exposing her to contempt,
11 hostility, derision and a risk of physical injury.

12 3. Defendant’s false accusations were made with malice and ill-will with the intent
13 to punish Plaintiff for exposing Defendant’s bigotry, sexism and racism during his
14 campaign for election as the mayor of Fountain Hills, Arizona and to deter her from
15 continuing her efforts to expose him. Defendants deliberate and malicious conduct
16 entitles the Plaintiff to an award of punitive damages.

17 18 **II. PARTIES**

19 4. Plaintiff is an Arizona resident who resides in Fountain Hills, Maricopa County,
20 Arizona

21 5. Defendant is an Arizona resident who resides in Fountain Hills, Maricopa County,
22 Arizona. Defendant is being sued in his individual capacity, and not in his capacity
23 as a member of the Fountain Hills Town Council. None of the wrongful conduct
24 alleged in this Complaint was, in any way, related to the performance of Defendant’s
25 official or authorized duties as a member of the Fountain Hills Town Council.

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III. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 6. The Superior Court in Maricopa County has the legal authority to hear and decide this case.
- 7. The tortious and unlawful conduct complained of in this action occurred in Maricopa County.
- 8. The Plaintiff resides in Maricopa County.
- 9. The Defendant resides in Maricopa County.

IV. DISCOVERY TIER

- 10. Pursuant to Rule 26.2 the Court should assign this case to Tier 3.

V. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- 11. Plaintiff has been a resident of Fountain Hills since January of 2016. From January of 2016 to March of 2023 Plaintiff had only peripheral involvement in the local politics of Fountain Hills.
- 12. In 2022, Allen Skillicorn was elected to the Fountain Hills Town Council, following what was described in the media as an ugly and divisive campaign spearheaded by a newly formed political action committee, Reclaim Our Town (ROT). Skillicorn was one of the three ROT endorsed candidates elected in 2022.
- 13. Following his election, Skillicorn, who described himself as a “chaos agent”, was viewed by many residents of Fountain Hills, including Plaintiff, as a polarizing presence on the Town Council. Through his social media accounts, Skillicorn regularly attacked, demeaned and degraded members of the LGBTQIA+ community, community leaders and public officials. In January of 2023 Plaintiff began monitoring Skillicorn’s social media activity.

1 14. In May of 2023, Defendant, a member of the Fountain Hills Town Council,
2 announced his candidacy for mayor of Fountain Hills. Defendant's mayoral
3 candidacy was supported by ROT. In the course of monitoring Skillicorn's social
4 media, Plaintiff discovered a number of Defendant's posts and comments that
5 attacked, demeaned, and degraded members of the LGBTQIA+ community,
6 Muslims, immigrants, public figures and public officials.

7 15. In January of 2024 Plaintiff formed a political action committee, Flourish Fountain
8 Hills, with the stated mission of challenging the corrosive, hyper-partisan politics and
9 the "culture war" introduced by ROT during the 2022 election.

10 16. During the February 6, 2024, Town Council meeting, Defendant publicly
11 humiliated a resident, who had repeatedly criticized Skillicorn for his social media
12 posts. During the meeting Defendant chastised the resident by saying: "You have
13 repeatedly come before this Council asking us to admonish Councilman
14 Skillicorn." Defendant then proceeded to show the Mayor, the Vice Mayor and the
15 public, a photocopy of a meme, which had been posted by the resident on social
16 media. The meme consisted of a photo shopped image of former President Trump
17 being assaulted by a donkey, as he was bending over a golf ball. Plaintiff, aware of
18 Defendant's many crude social media posts, was stunned by his hypocrisy.

19 17. During the March 5, 2024, meeting of the Fountain Hills Town Council,
20 Defendant claimed that he was viewed in the community as a "champion of
21 women". Plaintiff, aware of the Defendant's many misogynistic social media
22 posts, decided to challenge his claim that he was a "champion of women".

23 18. On May 9, 2024, Plaintiff sent an email to Defendant. (Exhibit 1). The email
24 was captioned: "Your contention that you are a champion of women". Attached to
25 the video were four posts published by Defendant on Facebook.

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1 19. The first post, published by Defendant, pictured Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, a
2 Muslim, wearing a turban. The caption read: “It’s not a Hijab. It’s a diaper for
3 people with shit for brains”. (Exhibit 2)

4 20. The second post, published by Defendant, consisted of the following statement:
5 “When Kamala Harris said, she had some African American in her! She was referring
6 to Willie Brown!” (Exhibit 3)

7 21. The third post, published by Defendant, a photoshopped image of Hilary Clinton,
8 was captioned: “Hilary without makeup is actually George Soros”. (Exhibit 4)

9 22. The fourth post, published by Defendant, pictured Susan Gordan, who served
10 as the Deputy Director of the National Intelligence agency from 2017 to 2019. It
11 had been rumored that Gordon was a “whistle blower” who raised concerns over
12 former President Trump’s 2019 conversation with Volodymyr Zelensky resulting in
13 Trump’s first impeachment. The caption read: “Here’s the “Whistle Blowjob” that
14 claimed she heard President Trump talk to the Ukrainian President. She’s a leftover
15 leftist from Obama’s regime a pink vagina hat wearer name is Sue Gordon” Above
16 the photo, Defendant commented: “Is this true? Is this the rat?” (Exhibit 5).

17 23. Rather, than acknowledge the offensiveness of the posts and apologize,
18 Defendant responded to Plaintiff as follows: “Beth, please keep posting altered
19 posts, tweets, comments out of context and the life (sic). Last I heard it was illegal
20 to threaten the life of a president.” (Exhibit 6) Beneath this message Defendant
21 pasted one of the Plaintiff’s social media posts from January 19, 2021, when she
22 had attended a Biden rally. The post, captioned “Dreams Really Can Come True
23 consisted of a photograph of Plaintiff, seated with two other women, holding a sign
24 that read: “I dream of a president who does not give me night terrors” (Exhibit 7)
25 Defendant copied Fountain Hills’ Mayor Ginny Dickey, and other councilmembers
26 on his reply.

1 24. In response, the Plaintiff explained the meaning of her sign, stated that his posts
2 had not been altered, and suggested that if he believed that she had made a death
3 against the President, he should report her post to the Secret Service. (Exhibit 8). In
4 response to Plaintiff's suggestion Defendant responded: "Beth, any threat of a
5 president (sic) is a treat (sic) taken seriously. Perhaps this will make it to the Secret
6 Service." (Exhibit 9)

7 25. On May 10, 2024, plaintiff sent a follow up email to Defendant specifically
8 asking him whether or not he had published each of the four offensive posts attached
9 to her May 9th communication. (Exhibit10). Defendant made no reply to this email.

10 26. In the course of his mayoral campaign Defendant posted weekly self-
11 promotional videos he dubbed, "Friedel Friday". In June of 2024, the Plaintiff
12 posted a collection of Defendant's offensive posts on the website Flourish Fountain
13 Hills. The article was titled: "Friedel Friday: Special Edition". The article's purpose
14 was described as giving residents "the opportunity to explore the true character of
15 this man who aspires to be our community's mayor". The article included
16 additional offensive posts published by Defendant. (Exhibit 11) The article also
17 incorporated the following advisory: "Please note that Friedel has been shown a
18 preview of his offensive social media posts and although he suggested that some
19 were 'taken out of context' or 'altered, he very pointedly failed to deny that he
20 published them." (Exhibit 11)

21 27. Defendant maintains a "Friedel for Mayor" Facebook Page and website.
22 Plaintiff challenged many of the statements and claims Defendant made on these
23 sites. Defendant would routinely respond to Plaintiff's comments with a reply that
24 identified her as "the real Beth with a death threat against the President". (Exhibit
25 12).

26 28. During the period from late June through July of 2024 the offensive posts
27 featured on "Friedel Friday: Special Edition" were being widely circulated on social
28

1 media. Some of these posts were published by residents on Defendant's mayoral
2 candidate page and website. Additional, equally offensive posts, created by
3 Defendant were discovered and placed in circulation by other residents. (Exhibit
4 13).

5 29. As the July primary approached, Defendant's offensive posts were receiving
6 significant attention on social media and residents began questioning him about
7 them. (Exhibit 14) Rather, than acknowledge and apologize, Defendant falsely
8 claimed that posts had been created by AI. (Exhibit 14)

9 30. When Plaintiff challenged Defendant's assertion that the posts had been
10 generated by AI, he responded that one of his fellow council members, "did a
11 detailed examination of those posts. All were created by you or your PAC."
12 (Exhibit 15) Defendant also accused Plaintiff of lying, making illegal campaign
13 contributions, and filling fraudulent campaign finance reports. (Exhibit 15)

14 30. Plaintiff advised Defendant that she had not created any of his posts through AI
15 or otherwise. On information and belief Defendant continues to accuse Plaintiff of
16 creating his offensive posts through "AI", but is unable to confirm this belief
17 because, after making the false accusation against her, Defendant blocked her from
18 even viewing his social media pages or his website.

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IV. CLAIMS

COUNT ONE (DEFAMATION PER SE)

31. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the allegations set forth in paragraphs 1-30 of this Complaint.

32. Threatening the life of the President of the United States is a Class D felony under *U.S.C Title 18, Section §871*.

33. Defendant repeatedly and falsely accused Plaintiff of threatening to kill a sitting President.

34. Defendant’s false accusation that Plaintiff committed the crime of threatening the life of the President of the United States constitutes defamation per se.

35. Defendant’s false accusation that Plaintiff committed the crime of threatening the life of President Trump was made maliciously and with ill will to punish her for exposing his offensive social media posts, to deter her from continuing to expose his offensive social media posts, and to discredit, humiliate, embarrass and endanger her.

COUNT II (DEFAMATION AND DEFAMATION PER SE)

36. Plaintiff incorporates by reference the allegations set forth in paragraphs 1-35 of this Complaint

37. Defendant falsely accused Plaintiff of using artificial intelligence to generate offensive posts that portrayed him as racist, transphobic, misogynistic and bigoted. At the time Defendant made these accusations he knew that he had published the offensive posts and his accusation was false. Defendant’s false accusation was made knowingly with the malicious intent to discredit, humiliate, and embarrass Plaintiff.

38. Defendant falsely accused Plaintiff of lying, making illegal campaign contributions and filing false campaign reports. At the time these false statements

1 were made Defendant knew or reasonably should have know that the statements
2 were false.

3 39. Defendants false accusations that Plaintiff fraudulently impersonated him,
4 created fake social media posts, and violated campaign finance laws constitute
5 defamation and defamation per se.

6 40. Plaintiff is a retired lawyer and a member in good standing in the community
7 and her reputation for honesty and integrity is important to her. Defendant's false
8 accusation that she created fake posts with AI has caused damage to Plaintiff's
9 reputation by impugning her honesty and integrity, resulting in emotional distress
10 and harassment.

11 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

12
13 Based on the foregoing Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendant as follows:

- 14 **A.** An award of nominal, compensatory damages, including general,
15 actual, pecuniary, and damages in amounts to be determined at trial;
- 16 **B.** An award of punitive damages;
- 17 **C.** Reasonable and necessary attorneys' fees;
- 18 **D.** Reasonable and necessary costs of suit;
- 19 **E.** Pre-judgment and post-judgment interest at the highest lawful rates;
- 20 **F.** Injunctive relief ordering the Defendant to issue a public
21 retraction and remove the false and defamatory statements from any
22 website and/or social media accounts under his control or under the
23 control of parties in privity with him;
- 24 **G.** Injunctive relief enjoining Defendant from repeating or
25 republishing his defamatory accusations and statements; and
- 26 **H.** Such other and further relief as this Court deems just and
27 appropriate.
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JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff demands a jury trial on all matters so triable.

Respectfully submitted,

DATED: October 4, 2024

Bethany Culp
Pro se

by: s/ Bethany Culp


15429 East Richwood Avenue

Fountain Hills, Az 85268

Tel: 651-295-1334

E-mail: bethanykculp@gmail.com

Exhibit 1

 From: **Beth Culp** >
To: Gerry Friedel >
Cc: gdickey@fountainhillsaz.gov >
sgryzbowski@fountainhillsaz.gov >
pmmcMahon@fountainhillsaz.gov > hthoth@fountainhillsaz.gov >
bkalivianakis@fountainhillsaz.gov >
asskillicorn@fountainhillsaz.gov >
Bcc: [Don Scott](#) > [Dianne Price](#) >
May 9, 2024 at 1:12 PM

Your contention that you are a champion of women

Councilmember Friedel:

Set out below are four posts that establish that you are not, as you claim, a champion of women. To the contrary, these posts reflect your misogynistic beliefs that: a woman wearing a turban (not a hijab) must have "shit for brains"; a woman cannot succeed unless she has sex with a more powerful man; a woman, who served as Deputy Director of the National Intelligence Agency, is a "Whistle Blow Job" and a "pink vagina hat wearer"; and the former Secretary of State is nothing more than the alter ego of a rich and powerful man.

These posts not only reflect your reprehensible beliefs about women they reflect your cultural ignorance (you do not know the difference between Sikhs and Muslims); your xenophobia; and Anti-semitism. The provenance of these posts is not in question. There are many more.

Exhibit 2



Exhibit 3



Exhibit 4

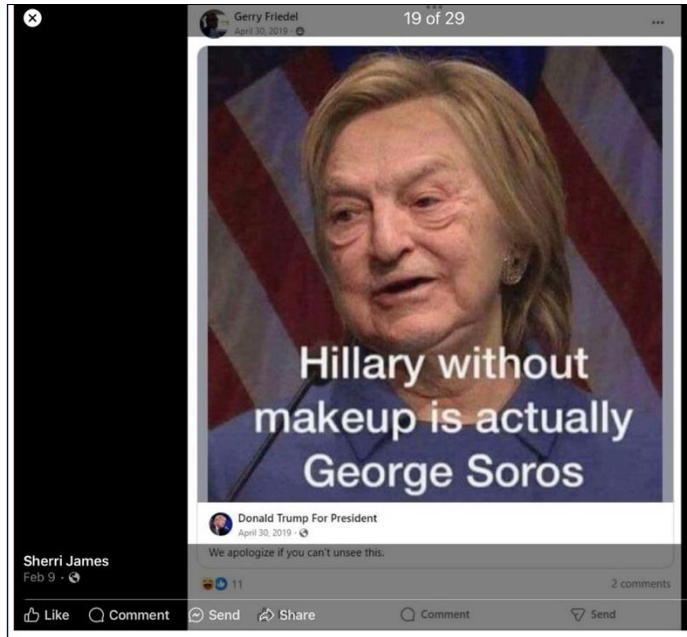




Exhibit 5








Exhibit 6




 **Gerry Friedel** 5/9/24
To: Beth Cc: Ginny, sgryzbowski@fountainhillsaz.gov & 4 more... > 

Re: Your contention that you are a champion of women

Beth, please keep posting altered posts, tweets, comments out of context and the like. Last I heard it was illegal to threaten the life of a president.

11:19   

 **Beth Culp** 


 **Beth Culp** 
Jan 19, 2021 · 

Dreams really can come true!

Exhibit 7



Exhibit 8

 **Beth Culp** 5/9/24
To: Gerry Friedel >

Re: Your contention that you are a champion of women

I dreamt of a President (Biden) who did not give me night terrors (Trump) and I got one! Send it to the secret service Gerry and see if they view my statement as a threat.

The posts have not been altered. But good to know that you are prepared to claim that they were. Goes to the integrity concern.

Sent from my iPhone

On May 9, 2024, at 11:35 AM, Gerry Friedel <gfriedel@fountainhillsaz.gov> wrote:

Exhibit 9

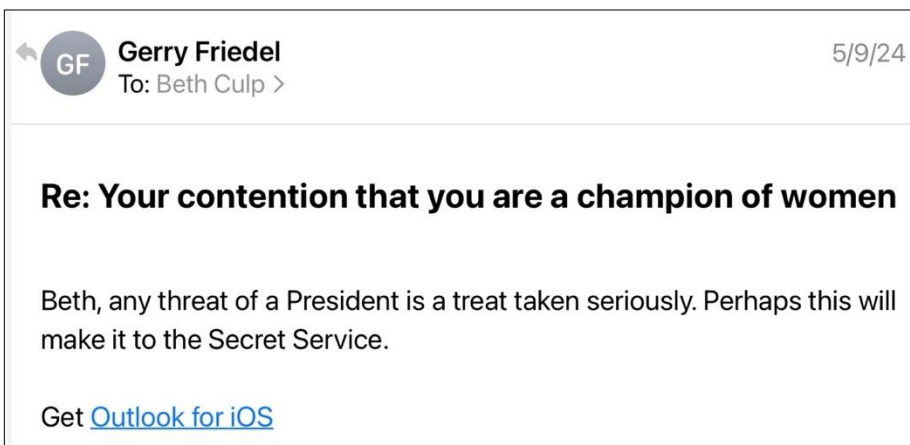


Exhibit 10



Beth Culp

May 10, 2024 at 12:19 PM

Fwd: Your contention that you are a champion of women

To: Gerry Friedel, Cc: Beth Culp, Bcc: Don Scott

[Details](#)

Councilmember Friedel:

To ensure that the record is clear please respond to the following direct questions:

1. Did you publish the first post (woman with turban) on social media?
2. Did you publish the second post (Kamala Harris) on social media?
3. Did you publish the third post (George Soros) on social media?
4. Did you publish the fourth post (Susan Gordon) on social media?

I look forward to your response.

Sent from Beth's iPad

Rd

Begin forwarded message:

From: Beth Culp <bethanykculp@gmail.com>

Date: May 9, 2024 at 11:12:29 AM MST

To: Gerry Friedel <gfriedel@fountainhillsaz.gov>

Cc: gdickey@fountainhillsaz.gov, sgryzbowski@fountainhillsaz.gov, pmcmahon@fountainhillsaz.gov, hthoth@fountainhillsaz.gov, bkalivianakis@fountainhillsaz.gov, asskillicorn@fountainhillsaz.gov

Subject: Your contention that you are a champion of women

Councilmember Friedel:

[See More](#)

Exhibit 11

Friedel Friday: Special Edition

by admin | Jun 21, 2024 | Current News Posts, Election Straight Talk | 0 comments



It's Friday again and time for another edition of "Friedel Friday." Where will Gerry take us this week?

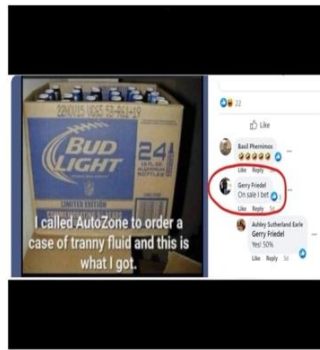
He has already taken us to the Splash Pad and the Skate Park, both of which fall clearly within the "nice to have" category he has publicly disdained. Will he take us back to Falcon Field or the Planetarium/Library at McDowell Elementary while he pretends that he provided volunteer or financial support to either project?

Since declaring his candidacy for mayor of #FountainHills, Gerry has tried really hard to portray to show us what a concerned, committed, and honorable person he is. But, sometimes he slips up.

In this Special Edition of Friedel Friday we offer residents the opportunity to explore the true character of this man who aspires to be our community's mayor. We will be taking a brief tour of Gerry Friedel's social media posts.

! Please also note that Friedel has been shown a preview of his offensive social media posts and although he suggested that some were "taken out of context" or altered, he very pointedly failed to deny that he published them. !

Gerry has targeted members of the transgender community for ridicule, such as with his comment to the "AutoZone" image attached. This will serve as our tour's third stop.



This post, made after Budweiser featured a transgender internet influencer in an advertisement, is the only one on the tour that has been altered. A red circle was used to highlight Gerry's comment.



Exhibit 12



 Author
Gerry Friedel for Mayor Fountain Hills AZ
Beth Culp this is the real Beth and the head of Flourish PAC with a death threat against a President.

7 2 comments 158 plays

Like Comment Share

Just A Deal · Follow
Apr 24 ·

Home Friends Video Marketplace Notifications Menu



 Author
Gerry Friedel for Mayor Fountain Hills AZ
Beth Culp
And this is The Real Beth with a death threat against a President!

 Mike Geronimo and 8 others 4 comments 120 plays

Like Comment Share

 Author
Gerry Friedel for Mayor Fountain Hills AZ
Beth Culp
And this is The Real Beth with a death threat against a President!

 Mike Geronimo and 8 others 4 comments 120 plays

Like Comment Share

Exhibit 13

Bob Brown
September 24, 2019 · 🌐
Nancy Pelosi sucks dicks.
👍👎👏 19
Like Comment

All comments ▾

Gerry Friedel
Only after an alignment of those chompers! ...
4y Like Reply

Bob Brown Author
Gerry Friedel somebody removed my post. Pussies ...
4y Like Reply

Pam Simpson
Gerry Friedel 🤔🤔🤔 ...
4y Like Reply 2

3h Like Reply

Sally Sturm
23 hrs
Watching Barr questioning- dems are such dicks!!!
👍👎👏 12 2 Comments Seen by 50
Like Comment

Gerry Friedel Big ones! Except where it counts!
Like Reply 22h Edited 🤔

Gene Leone DISEASED dicks, to be exact!
Like Reply 21h

Gerry Friedel shared a post.
8 hrs

Muslims hate pork, beer, dogs, bikinis, Jesus, and freedom of speech. My question is, what the hell do they come to America for?!

GOD CREATED MAN AND WOMAN

DEMOCRATS CREATED ALL THE OTHER GENDERS

JAMES RED PILLS AMERICA
On YouTube

Exhibit 14

The image shows two screenshots of a Facebook post and its comments. The post is from 'Gerry Friedel for Mayor Fountain Hills AZ' and is dated '1d'. The first screenshot, taken at 7:26, shows the post and the first two comments from 'Kit Oakland'. The second screenshot, taken at 7:27, shows the post and the next three comments, including a reply from the author.

Post:
Gerry Friedel for Mayor
Fountain Hills AZ
1d · 🌐

Comment 1:
Kit Oakland
What happened to your comments? Do you delete them?
1d Like Reply

Comment 2:
Kit Oakland
I saw those other postings with your name on them that were offensive to a lot of people in our town. Why are you denying them now if you believe in them? And please don't respond with that 2020 because I didn't vote that year.
14h Like Reply

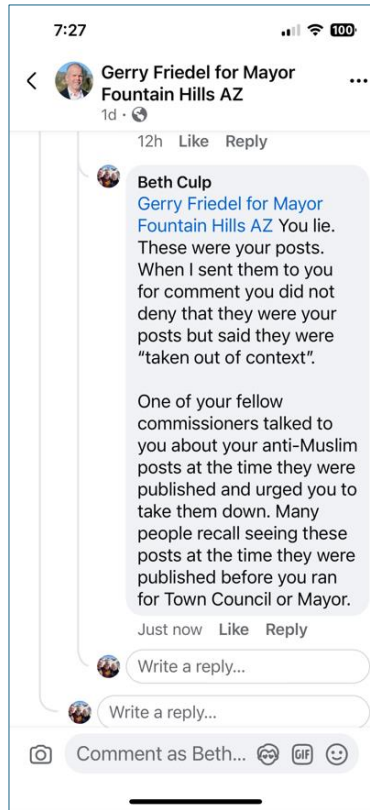
Comment 3 (Author):
Gerry Friedel for Mayor
Fountain Hills AZ
Kit Oakland I refuse to address AI fake generated content on my page and you should too
14h Like Reply

Comment 4:
Kit Oakland
Gerry Friedel for Mayor
Fountain Hills AZ
Deflection. Did you post those offensive pics on your own website or were you hacked?
13h Like Reply

Comment 5 (Author):
Gerry Friedel for Mayor
Fountain Hills AZ
Kit Oakland nothing like that has ever been posted on my website. These are AI generated.
12h Like Reply

Comment 6:
Kit Oakland
Gerry Friedel for Mayor
Fountain Hills AZ ???
12h Like Reply

Exhibit 15



1d Like Reply

The comment Gerry Friedel for Mayor Fountain Hills AZ is replying to has been deleted.



Author

Gerry Friedel for Mayor Fountain Hills AZ

Beth Culp first of all one of my fellow "council members " not commissioners did a detailed examination of those posts. All were created by you and your PAC. So who is lying? You still haven't answered your endorsement of and funding of candidates? Who's lying? You are the finance reports tell the truth and you apparently don't.

1d Like Reply