

Council Candidate Says Her Facebook Account Was Hacked

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In a Lexington City Council candidate forum where the main source of contention was over whether to elect or appoint school board members, Republican candidate Collette Barry-Rec raised the alarm of what she sees as misinformation and bad actors attempting to undermine the election.

In a virtual candidate forum hosted by 50 Ways Rockbridge last week, Barry-Rec cited unknown forces attempting to divide people.

“There is a lot of misinformation going around, and it’s very sad, because what it does is it pits one group against another,” Barry-Rec said. “I don’t want to be part of this. I want to step back and be a unifying force.”

Barry-Rec was referencing remarks made on her Facebook page that has caused consternation among many voting this November. She has denied making such remarks and alleges that her account was hacked.

In an interview Monday, Barry-Rec stated that she became aware of the alleged hacking of her Facebook account on Sept. 19. “Prompted by a message from a friend, I realized I had been hacked,” Barry-Rec said. “This lady ... sent me a message saying someone I think you know has been killed. And she gave me a link ... so I clicked on it, and there was nothing or a bunch of gibberish.”

The scheme Barry-Rec fell for is a common tactic used by scammers to install malware on a person’s device. A scammer will send a bad link that installs malware on someone’s device and once the scammer gains control, they then can spread the malicious link to that person’s friends.

Barry-Rec first mentioned the alleged hacking in the candidate forum last Wednesday. She said that her account had been hacked multiple times since April 2022.

“My husband and I discovered that my personal Facebook account had been hacked into four times from someone in Rocky Mount [and then in Luray],” Barry-Rec said. “They hacked into it in April, July, September, and as of Monday morning, they were still actively hacking into the account.”

Soon after discovering the suspicious activity, Barry-Rec contacted the Lexington Police Department, and she is also considering contacting State Attorney General Jason Miyares.

According to an email from Lexington Chief of Police Angela Greene, no official police report has been made. “At this time, it is just a citizen inquiry that my detective will look into,” Greene said. “If during this preliminary inquiry the detective believes there may have been some criminal activity, then he will officially file a police report and begin an investigation.”

Barry-Rec warned of the effects of what she sees as misinformation in both the City Council forum and in her interview.

Nevertheless, many of the Facebook posts which have been the source of criticism against Barry-Rec were posted on her Facebook page, most notably on June 25, 2021, and Dec. 31, 2020 – almost a year before Barry-Rec alleges there was the first suspicious activity on her account.

The Dec. 31, 2020, post referenced fighting against a “fraudulent” election on January 6th, 2021.

“... Tell them to stand strong and fight for OUR Country on the 6th by challenging Bidos fraudulent electoral votes!” a post to Barry-Rec’s Facebook said. “Massive cheating and fraud. More evidence every day! Come on. Let’s do this!”

To her part, Barry-Rec stated that she will accept the results of this November’s city council election but did not comment on any other races.

“Definitely [to accept the results of her election]. I don’t get the feeling there’s a whole lot of fraudulent activity in Rockbridge,” Barry-Rec said.

The other hot button post from Barry-Rec’s Facebook account is a comment she made on June 25, 2021.

“Good freaking grief. Hold the line. Never give up. This bunch of arrogant evil fraud corrupt hurtful American hating commie A-holes need to be gone! Hold the line! Do whatever you can every day then get on your knees and pray for guidance to do more! No election on November 3. It was a COUP.”

When Barry-Rec was pressed on whether or not she posted the statements or agreed with the sentiments, she denied it.

“No, this is bizarre, this is really bizarre ... I don’t recall saying this kind of stuff,” Barry-Rec said.

When asked for clarification, she went on to say, “These are not things that I have said and I think they have been manipulated, and we need to track it down.”

Further, Barry-Rec’s husband, Michael, interjected, “We do not know how far back this hacking has gone,” alluding to the fact that both of these posts appeared before Barry-Rec reported there was suspicious activity.

Currently, Barry-Rec’s Facebook account has been temporarily disabled and is no longer accessible online. The other City Council candidates declined to comment on the matter during the forum.