



City of Seattle
Office of the Mayor

News

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Mayor Mike McGinn meets with Village Voice Media to discuss underage sex trafficking

Asks Backpage.com to pull down their ads until they put stronger safeguards in place

SEATTLE– Mayor Mike McGinn, Councilmember Tim Burgess, and Assistant Chief Jim Pugel of the Seattle Police Department met today with representatives of Village Voice Media, which owns the Seattle Weekly and Backpage.com, to impress upon them the seriousness of underage sex trafficking and the need for them to act now.

“We specifically asked them to pull down all their adult ads until they have safeguards in place against underage trafficking. That should include a model presenting photo ID in person showing that they are of legal age, said Mayor Mike McGinn. “They were not prepared to agree to that request immediately, they indicated that they were taking that request seriously and would respond within 1-2 weeks. We have made our position clear and we expect them to take the actions we requested immediately. They need to clean up their act.”

Underage sex trafficking is a serious problem in Seattle. A City of Seattle Human Services Department report published in 2008 estimated there are 300 to 500 children being exploited for commercial sex each year. In the last 12 months, 185 cases of underage sex trafficking were identified in King County.

Backpage.com is a well-known accelerant of underage sex trafficking. Since the beginning of 2010, 22 children advertised on Backpage.com were recovered by the Seattle Police Department. No juveniles were discovered on any other sites in that time – that includes ads on Craigslist, The Stranger, and other adult sites. The problem is specific to Backpage.com. The Aim Group estimated that Backpage made \$2.1 million in revenue off of erotic services since January 2011.

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