

Union-Tribune email to city attorney

From: Mcdonald, Jeffrey
Sent: Wednesday, September 06, 2017 10:09 AM
To: 'mfoley@cityofelcajon.us' <mfoley@cityofelcajon.us>
Cc: 'hsavage@cityofelcajon.us' <hsavage@cityofelcajon.us>
Subject: media request/ San Diego Union-Tribune

Hi,

I've been poking around the business dealings of Councilman Bessmon Kalasho. You probably know Mr. Kalasho operated a for-profit chamber of commerce for years until setting up the nonprofit Middle Eastern COC three months ago. One of his sponsors is Waste Management Inc., which gave him \$2500 earlier this year and also performs trash-hauling services for the city. Mr. Kalasho appears to have voted on Waste Management issues as a member of the council in FEB and again in JUN, when the council approved its list of delinquencies submitted by WMI.

Here are my questions for the City Attorney's Office: Is it OK that Mr. Kalasho is taking money from WMI (and possibly others) and then casting votes on issues related to the company, why or why not? Also, were you aware of this situation and have you performed any legal research or issued any opinion on this situation? If so, can I see the opinion and if not, why not? Lastly, since Mr. Kalasho's chamber members are not public record, how do you ensure he is not violating conflict-of-interest rules when he votes on other routine matters such as street improvements, BIDs or other council items that affect his members?

I'm at 619-293-1708 if you have any questions about what I am asking you.

Thanks in advance and all best,

Jeff

Jeff McDonald | Reporter

O: +1 (619) 293-1708

jeff.mcdonald@sduniontribune.com

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**The San Diego
Union-Tribune**

Union-Tribune email to Kalasho (included a forward of the email to the city attorney)

On Wed, Sep 6, 2017 at 10:33 AM, Mcdonald, Jeffrey
<jeff.mcdonald@sduniontribune.com> wrote:

Hi,

I am doing a follow-up on the chamber issue I wrote about last week and have some questions. Also, I wanted you to be aware of questions I posed this morning to the EL Cajon city attorney, so I am including a copy of that email below. Here are my questions:

- 1) How do you manage potential conflicts of interest between your chamber and your city service?
- 2) Should you disclose your members publicly to avoid such possible conflicts, why or why not?
- 3) Why did you regularly imply in Facebook posts that the chamber was nonprofit ("Chamber Board discussing East County issues," "We are honored that we got to help so many Homeless people" et cetera) when you knew it was a for-profit business entity?
- 4) Waste Management Inc. told me this week it has canceled its membership after learning the chamber was a for-profit business entity now subject to a civil lawsuit alleging sexual harassment and other allegations. Also, Cox Communications tells me it is reviewing its relationship with the chamber in light of the same developments. What is your response to these developments?
- 5) You voted in FEB and again in JUN in favor of delinquencies submitted by WMI, which appears to be a conflict of interest, given the trash hauler paid you \$2500 for a membership earlier this year. Why did you cast ballots on city issues that directly affect one of your members, have you done so otherwise and will you continue to do so?
- 6) What if anything do you want to tell constituents about balancing your public service and private businesses?

We like to give 24 hours for a response to be as fair as possible, so please respond no later than 11am THU. As always, I am available at 619-293-1708 to discuss these issues if you have any question about what I am asking.

Thanks and all best,

Jeff

Kalasho response

From: Ben Kalasho [mailto:benkalasho@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, September 06, 2017 3:19 PM
To: Mcdonald, Jeffrey <jeff.mcdonald@sduniontribune.com>
Cc: Steve Liosi, Esq. <attorneyliosio@gmail.com>; Young, Ricky <ricky.young@sduniontribune.com>
Subject: Re: FW: media request/ San Diego Union-Tribune

Hello,

Interesting that you say, Waste Management told you this week it has canceled its membership “after learning the chamber was a for-profit business entity now subject to a civil lawsuit alleging sexual harassment and other allegations,” yet we just got off the phone with them and they told us that they never made such a statement but rather you twisted their words and came off as “one sided,” and “a bully” who even asked them for a proprietary letter to be forwarded to you and that they refused. They said that you didn’t take standard reporting protocol and they had told you that we had given them the proper status paperwork but you failed to mention that and you lied about it. What’s more interesting is that you say, “Cox Communications tells me it is reviewing its relationship with the chamber in light of the same developments,” the funny thing is that we also contacted Cox and they said that no such comment was made. Interesting isn’t it? I wonder that if they take the stand which version will they give, your made up one or the truth? See Jeff, I know your kind, you’re a troll who pretends to be a watch dog. I know you’re probably reading this going, “yes!” I got under Ben’s skin. No, on the contrary, this is all propounding evidence of harassment and perjury. I know that you are protected as a journalist from Libel, Slander or Defamation because it would be impossible for me to prove Actual Malice. And as a public figure, I’d need to prove that the story was published with the knowledge that it was false and or that the story was published with reckless disregard of whether or not it was false. There are so many blatant lies in your so called work that there should be an award dedicated to your honor, something like a “Worst Journalist Award,” but then to call you a journalist or a reporter wouldn’t be fair to the many great people of that profession. People unlike you who don’t harass, intimidate or lie just to get a story. I didn’t even know who you were before being harassed by you through the countless emails you’ve sent me and my wife, the many phone calls you’ve made to my attorney Steve or the many times you’ve contacted city hall essentially begging me to do an interview with you. You’re a troll, nothing more. You write opinion pieces which you disguise as facts, like when you wrote I was being investigated by the Attorney General, remember that troll? You knew then as you know now that it was a lie, that you in fact contacted the Attorney General and that the normal process was taking place, but, you didn’t write that did you? No, because you’re a troll. Your writing is based on assumption, everything you write has a bias of being spun for click bate so you can keep your job in this environment of where your position is slowly being eliminated at the UT, yeah, I heard about all the job cuts, it’s not a secret. Hey remember when you asked, “Why did you regularly imply on Facebook posts that the chamber was nonprofit (“Chamber Board discussing East County issues,” “We are honored that we got to help so many

Homeless people” et cetera) when you knew it was a for-profit business entity.” I guess I shouldn’t be surprised that you didn’t know that private companies can have Boards. See Jeff, I am on to your game, and you play it very well. Let’s see if I got it right, you ask me a question, then I answer it and you publish exactly what I say but you modify the question to fit your narrative and add a clever title to it for clicks. Does that about sum it up? Remember that time you accused me of copyright infringement on my own website? Then when I pointed out it was sourced you accused me of going in and changing it immediately or as you said it, “remedied” that. Again, I am not mad at your style, it’s actually clever, however, I do believe that we will be seeing each other in court soon, see Jeff, you aren’t as clever as you may think, and you aren’t as protected by the law as you may presume. We both know I am no stranger to court. See you soon.

Your obedient servant,

B. Kal

Follow-up from reporter

On Wed, Sep 6, 2017 at 3:42 PM, Mcdonald, Jeffrey
<jeff.mcdonald@sduniontribune.com> wrote:

Hi,

Thank you for the courtesy of a response, although I do not see where you have answered my questions. I’m sure you appreciate that one obligation of public office is responding to inquiries from the public, including the newspaper. I have no interest in your business activities other than what is required to do my job, which is to scrutinize public officials and agencies they serve. You are free to avoid the issues, although I don’t see how that serves you, your constituents or UT readers.

We have some time before we report these developments. If I hear from Cox and/ or WMI that I mischaracterized their positions I will certainly reframe my questions and report. Meantime, I hope you reconsider this reply and deal with the questions I posed rather than insult my motivation or professionalism.

Thanks again and all best,

Jeff

Answer from Kalasho

From: Ben Kalasho <benkalasho@gmail.com>

Sent: Wednesday, September 6, 2017 16:12

To: Mcdonald, Jeffrey

Cc: Steve Liosi, Esq.; Young, Ricky

Subject: Re: FW: media request/ San Diego Union-Tribune

You are hereby put on notice to refrain from contacting me or my wife by any means. Your email subscription which you placed with my Chamber was removed. Any further attempts to contact me or my wife or Members, Sponsors or affiliates of my Chamber by any means will be used against you in the upcoming harassment claim as we have already caught you in acts of deception of which they will testify in court as being fabricated by you.