

Message

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Sent: 3/8/2013 4:48:23 PM
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Subject: Collingwood Enterprise-Bulletin Article - OPP investigating town decisions: CBC

OPP investigating town decisions: CBC

By [Morgan Ian Adams](#), Enterprise-Bulletin

Friday, March 8, 2013 4:20:22 EST PM

COLLINGWOOD — A branch of the Ontario Provincial Police anti-rackets squad is investigating several allegations of impropriety tied to municipal decision-making, according to a report by CBC News.

In a story aired Friday morning, it is reported the OPP is investigating three complaints tied to allegations of conflicts of interest, and possibly bid-tampering in connection to the sale of the municipally-owned grain terminal property.

OPP spokesperson, Sgt. Pierre Chamberland, indicated he could not confirm whether an investigation was taking place — noting the OPP does not comment on any investigation that may or may not be underway in order to protect the integrity of the process.

The complaints, according to CBC, are also tied to the relationship between some members of council and Paul Bonwick — a former Member of Parliament for Simcoe-Grey and the brother of Mayor Sandra Cooper.

Cooper, in a news release issued late Friday, stated that councillors and staff "will work cooperatively with the authorities to ensure a proper and timely resolution so that council and staff can continue to dedicate their energies to positive efforts for the town.

"These allegations are disheartening to those of us who have worked so hard in serving the best interests of our community — nevertheless we will move forward on our successes and continue to seek the public's input on the various initiatives that council is working on"

Cooper would not comment beyond the content of the news release.

According to the broadcaster, the complaints stem from Bonwick's business relationships with PowerStream — which purchased half of Collingwood Public Utilities' electricity distribution business last spring — and a local resort interested in making a bid to the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation as a gaming site in the region identified by OLG as Zone C7 in its plans to modernize gambling in Ontario.

Bonwick, who is a government and communications consultant, does communications work for PowerStream, and had been approached by Georgian Manor Resort last year when it was in the process of positioning itself as a possible operator of a slots facility.

Bonwick says he has never lobbied members of council, or municipal staff on either issue.

The Municipal Conflict of Interest Act specifies a member of council has a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in a matter if it involves him or herself, a spouse, parents, or children.

PowerStream CAO and president Brian Bentz, in an interview with QMI Agency in May, 2012, said Bonwick played no role in the sale — and the idea that a third party would act as a broker in any deal "would not be normal practice in our industry."

PowerStream spokesperson Eric Fagen said Bonwick's firm was hired to assist with growth, strategies related to growth, and communications; it was a requirement of Bonwick's contract to disclose his PowerStream work to the town, including the mayor, the deputy-mayor, the CAO, and the clerk. Fagen said it is his understanding Bonwick did follow that requirement.

Bonwick confirmed those details, noting his role with PowerStream was clearly spelled out to municipal officials — including the mayor. The question was also asked of municipal officials if it was felt there was a conflict, "and the answer was a resounding no," said Bonwick.

It was also understood Bonwick would not be involved in any discussions with council or Collus board members "in any way, shape or form," he said.

Georgian Manor Resort CEO Peter Levoy, in an interview with QMI Agency on Friday morning, confirmed Bonwick had been paid a \$20,000 retainer, and had been offered a two-year contract.

However, said Levoy, the contract was never put into place, and Bonwick was out of the picture long before resort representatives presented their idea for a gaming and entertainment facility to Collingwood Town Council in mid-October of last year.

"Paul came back to us and said (because) it was a hot issue, and it could be a conflict of interest for him," because of his sister's role as mayor, he declined to work for the resort, said Levoy.

The point of hiring Bonwick, said Levoy, was to determine "what we as an organization needed to do to build our profile."

However, he said, it has become increasingly clear his resort would not have the ability to pursue a relationship with OLG, which would eventually determine the site and operator of any gaming facility.

Noting the parameters for an integrated resort development established by council on Monday night, Levoy said his company does not have the financial capability to compete at that level.

"As soon as it was apparent that it would become a controversial, or somewhat controversial issue, I declined (Georgian Manor's) offer," said Bonwick. "I knew that if I were involved, it would only create more controversy."

CBC is also reporting the OPP is investigating allegations by a local businessman of bid-tampering and attempting to unduly influence the process for the sale of the grain terminals.

Dr. James McCrimmon, one of two businessmen who proposed putting a mushroom farm in the 80-year-old structure, told a municipal councillor of allegations that Deputy-mayor Rick Lloyd instructed him how much to bid for the property, according to CBC.

McCrimmon has not yet responded to an interview request. Lloyd denies the allegation.

According to CBC, McCrimmon also claimed the mayor called him several times during the weekend prior by a vote of council to declare the grain terminal property for sale.

According to CBC, the councillor turned the allegations over to the OPP. The E-B has not been able to independently corroborate the details in the CBC report.

It's not the first time a municipal decision has been taken to the OPP; in 2005, a resident complained to the OPP about the town's decision to purchase the Tremont Hotel and what was then known as the Georgian Grill, and allegation of criminal wrongdoing by an unnamed member of town council.

A six-month investigation by the anti-racket squad turned up no basis for the allegation. The suggestion at the time was the complaint was politically-motivated.

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