

NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT

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"Hate To Think How A Regular Person Is Treated"

BY **Paul Bass** | JUL 29, 2010 4:27 PM

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THOMAS MACMILLAN, PAUL BASS PHOTOS

O'Brien (at left). Murphy (right).

Politicians and everyday taxpayers aren't the only ones fuming at their alleged treatment by New Haven's assessor this tax season. City Hall's top economic development official also had some choice words.

The official, Development Administrator Kelly Murphy, issued those choice words in an email to mayoral Chief of Staff Sean Matteson. The email was made available to the Independent as part of a larger review of documents provided Thursday in response to a Freedom of Information Act.

It came at the end of a 12-day flurry of emails about Murphy's efforts to get some data from Assessor Bill O'Brien's office about an assessment deferral for a Howard Avenue property that was part of pending development deal. (Click here to read Mary O'Leary's February preview of the deal in the Register.) Delays in getting that information apparently were holding up negotiations on the deal.

"this is how treats his colleagues for a mayoral project i hate to think how a regular person or business is treated," Murphy wrote to Matteson. "i am going to bring this up to the mayor."

Her staff was concerned that "a \$30 million project" was "languish[ing] because we haven't been able to get ... information." (The project has since moved forward again.)

Mayor John DeStefano was meanwhile hearing lots of complaints about how O'Brien's office is run. [Click here](#) to read about the subsequent review he took of the office and what plans he announced for making it work better. [A dozen aldermen have called](#) for O'Brien's removal from office, causing concern at City Hall that O'Brien is being used by political opponents as a scapegoat. (Example: In a June 21 email released Thursday, mayoral aide Elizabeth Benton suggested to mayoral spokeswoman Jessica Mayorga that they hold a quick private session with Register reporter Abbe Smith to do damage control hours before an aldermanic hearing on the subject. "I'm worried it's going to be [Alderman] Mike Smart fanning the flames of NHCAN-types all night long, ganging up on Bill O'Brien," Benton wrote.)

The emails involving Murphy and O'Brien dealt with a pending multi-part deal for the future of the property of 904 Howard Ave. Right now it's a public housing tower. The city plans to build a replacement for that tower, on Sylvan Avenue; then demolish the 904 Howard tower and sell the land to Yale-New Haven Hospital, which doesn't yet have a long-term plan for the property. A groundbreaking was originally scheduled for late June, then canceled. Housing

Authority of New Haven Executive Director Karen DuBois Walton said Thursday that the project is moving forward. A development deal was signed July 8; the federal government approved it. Work should begin soon, and a formal groundbreaking ceremony is tentatively planned for Aug. 24, according to DuBois-Walton.

Following are highlights from a series of emails concluding with Murphy's assessment of the assessor. It began with a message from economic development staffer Mike Pinto to his boss, Murphy. The email messages come from a file of emails sent to or from Sean Matteson in the first part of June. (O'Brien and Murphy couldn't be reached for comment Thursday afternoon.)

Michael Pinto 6/4/2010 2:53 PM

Kelly,

I have been working with Kenan Bigby at Trinity to finalize the Assessment Deferral for the New Rowe apartment building. The application is complete and is with the Assessor. But there are two complications, Kenan needs at least a preliminary assessment to finalize the budgeting on his end.

And at the Assessor's end, they have put everything else on hold to issue corrections because of the freeze of the property tax phase-in.

Is there something we can do to expedite the information for this important investment project?

Thanks, Michael

Kelly Murphy 6/7/2010 9:37PM

Hi Bill

Am writing to request your assistance on a joint project of the City's Office of Economic Development Administration and the Housing Authority to build new housing at the corner of Ward and Sylvan Streets. As a part of this project we will also demolishing the dilapidated William T Rowe Project (904 Howard) opening it up for new private development in the future (we did a land swap with YNHH). This project is ready to break ground later this month.

I am requesting your assistance in working with Kenan Bigby from Trinity Financial to finalize the developers assessment deferral application, please see note from Michael Pinto below. This project is unique in that will be a mix of market-rate units, affordable and replacement HANH units. Kenan's contract info is below ...

Bill, thank you in advance for your support of this important project.

Best,

Kelly

Michael Pinto 6/11/2010 12:25 PM

Kelly

I have just had another conversation with the assistant assessor, and am making no progress getting the application turned around.

Tony advised me to speak with you again.

In my discussions with Kenan Bigby he has assured me he can work with a "ball park" estimate of the assessment to do the final financials etc.

He assures me a the "hard numbers" can follow.

I recognize Bill O'Brien is out, but is there something we can do to get this estimated number by Monday - our \$30 million project languishes because we haven't been able to get the information.

Thanks

Michael

Sean Matteson 6/11/2010 12:36 PM

Mike -

Talk to [Controller] Mark Pietrosimone. I have Cc'd him on the email.

Mark Pietrosimone 6/11/2010 2:42PM

Roger Palmer said that he needs to run numbers by Bill Obrien on Monday and then he will communicate them to you.
thanks mp

Kelly Murphy 6/14/2010 1:01 PM

did you get a resolution?

Michael Pinto 6/15/2010 11:37:43 AM

Kelly,
I have still not received the numbers on Rowe.

Kelly Murphy 6/15/2010 12:24 PM

Can I get some help here? This is holding things up. Groundbreaking on 6/23

From: Mark Pietrosimone
Cc: Kelly Murphy
Cc: Sean Matteson
To: William O'Brien
Sent: 6/15/2010 12:45:24PM

Bill please take care of this today. Thank you. mp

Kelly Murphy 6/15/2010 6:13 PM

[To Michael Pinto]:
did you get what you needed?

From: Michael Pinto
To: Kelly Murphy
Sent: 6/16/2010 12:07:53 PM
Subject: Re: Fw: Fw: Fwd: New Rowe Assessment Deferral

I have not yet received the Rowe information.
I politely asked Bill about it this morning.

From: Kelly Murphy
To: Mark Pietrosimone, Sean Matteson
Date: 6/16/2010 12:23 PM
Subject: Fw: Fw: Fw: Fwd: New Rowe Assessment Deferral

Seriously, can't we get this done. This is a major Mayoral project, why is this so hard.

From: Sean Matteson
To: O'Brien, William
Date: 6/16/2010 2:46 PM
Subject: 904 Howard

Bill -

904 Howard, the new Rowe project, has a groundbreaking on 6/24 just around the corner. I was checking on the status of finalizing the developers assessment deferral application. As you know this is a \$30M project and a Mayoral priority project. It is my understanding that the application is with the Assessor Office but Trinity needs the preliminary assessment numbers to finish the budget.

I of course understand that your office has a number of matters already on the table with folks out doing re-val

inspections and tax bill corrections from freezing the phase-in, but I would appreciate it if this were a priority for your office.

If there is anything I can do to help please let me know.

Sean Matteson 6/16/2010 4:01 PM

[To Murphy] Spoke to Assessor. Assessment number will be sent to you late this afternoon he understands it is a priority.

From: Kelly Murphy
To: Matteson, Sean
Date: 6/16/2010 4:10 PM
Subject: Re: 904 Howard

thank you very much. BUT we need to discuss the lack of cooperation here. me and my team spend weeks chasing this down when it should simply be a matter of business. this is how he treats his colleagues for a mayoral project i hate to think how a regular person or business is treated. i am going to bring this up to the mayor.

Comments

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