

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE NINETEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR MARTIN COUNTY, STATE OF FLORIDA
CIVIL DIVISION

STEPHEN G. LEIGHTON, a
natural person,

Plaintiff,

v.

SARAH MERKER, a natural person,
and MICHAEL MERKER, a natural
person,

Defendants.

Case No.: 43-2023-CA-000134

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

**AMENDED COMPLAINT &
DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiff STEPHEN G. LEIGHTON, through the undersigned counsel, brings this action
against Defendants SARAH MERKER and MICHAEL MERKER, and alleges as follows:

ALLEGATIONS COMMON TO ALL COUNTS

Parties, Jurisdiction, & Venue

1. Plaintiff Stephen G. Leighton (“Mr. Leighton”) is a natural person who resides in
Martin County, Florida.

2. Defendant Sarah Merker (“Ms. Merker”) is a natural person who resides in Martin
County, Florida. As detailed below, Ms. Merker has worked to conceal her actual identity by
utilizing social media platforms, including Facebook, under fictitious names in a concerted effort
to avoid detection and to prevent those whom she defamed from learning of her true identity. While
simultaneously operating fictitious social media pages like “Martin County Corruption Exposed,”
Ms. Merker also maintained (and still does maintain) publicly-accessible social media pages

bearing her true name and identity. As it pertains to those publicly accessible pages bearing Ms. Merker's true identity, the content contained therein remained, for the most part, non-defamatory in nature.

3. Defendant Michael Merker ("Mr. Merker") is a natural person who resides in Martin County, Florida. Mr. Merker was the Martin County IT Director who was given secured access to various databases containing confidential and sensitive information that is not accessible to the public. As shown herein, Mr. Merker has utilized his position at Martin County to aid and assist his daughter, Ms. Merker, by funneling information to Ms. Merker so that she can publicize false and defamatory material on social media platforms.

4. This Court has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to § 26.012, Fla. Stat., as the amount in controversy exceeds \$50,000.00 exclusive of attorneys' fees, costs, and interest.

5. Venue is proper in this Court as the parties reside in Martin County, and the claims asserted herein arose in and accrued in Martin County.

"Martin County Corruption Exposed"

6. In or about July of 2022, a new Facebook page known as "Martin County Corruption Exposed" began publishing posts on the site. This Facebook page did not disclose or otherwise identify the custodian, owner, or creator of the content that was being widely publicized to the general public. Until the original version of this lawsuit was filed (and substantial expense was incurred to unmask the identity of the Facebook page described herein), Mr. Leighton and others who fell victim to defamatory content contained on "Martin County Corruption Exposed" were unaware of identity of the persons who generated the posts for public consumption.

7. “Martin County Corruption Exposed” was created as part of a local trend by anonymous individuals seeking to inflame the community by pushing out false, misleading, and otherwise defamatory materials for public consumption.

8. Local media and the Martin County Sheriff’s Office (“MCSO”) took notice of the fake social media accounts and commentary by reporting to the public on July 14, 2022 that fake social media posts were circulating in the community. According to one media report, MCSO was quoted as saying “false narratives come through, and they are so believable that people who follow our Facebook and the regular media fall for it.”

9. Like the other fake social media pages that started to draw the attention of the local media and MSCO, “Martin County Corruption Exposed” was, as its name suggests, designed to slander and defame any person, family, business, or other organization that was identified, discussed, or named in the various posts that were disseminated to the public. As written on its initial page, “Martin County Corruption Exposed” was designed to “expose[] the corruption and dark money politics rapidly ruining our ecosystems and quality of life.”

10. These posts were singularly focused on what the author conceived as a widespread conspiracy among elected officials, judges, attorneys, law enforcement officers, business owners, and numerous others, which (alleged) conspiracy was designed to despoil Martin County via the development of private property.

11. While Mr. Leighton has “exposed” the identity of Ms. Merker as the administrator and owner of “Martin County Corruption Exposed,” he has also learned that Ms. Merker was not acting as a “lone wolf” in her quest to defame those individuals identified on the aforementioned Facebook page.

12. Rather, Ms. Merker was working in concert with others to utilize an anonymous social media platform to inflict financial and reputational harm on honest working individuals residing or conducting business in Martin County.

13. One such individual providing assistance to Ms. Merker was her father, Mr. Merker. Mr. Merker (or Ms. Merker with her father's consent and acquiescence) utilized government devices to follow, with near obsession, United States Congressman Brian Mast (Mr. Leighton's boss) and MCSO (Mr. Leighton's employer). Government records show Mr. Merker performed regular searches into, and about, Congressman Mast and the Martin County Sheriff's Office. Mr. Merker (or Ms. Merker with her father's consent and acquiescence) also utilized his government computer to access the "Martin County Corruption Exposed" Facebook page, an affiliated page entitled "Dark Money Martin County," and other social media platforms belonging to Ms. Merker.

14. Since the creation of Martin County Corruption Exposed, Mr. Merker (or Ms. Merker with her father's consent and acquiescence) accessed "Martin County Corruption Exposed" through government devices on multiple occasions.

15. As a forensic investigation performed by Martin County earlier this year revealed, on December 16, 2022, Mr. Merker (or Ms. Merker with her father's consent and acquiescence) utilized his Martin County computer beginning at 8:22 p.m. to access "Martin County Corruption Exposed" and provide or review comments, to review or change material to the aforementioned fake Facebook account, and then to access Ms. Merker's personal Facebook profile. According to the investigation, Mr. Merker (or someone with permission to access his government devices) performed these functions within a matter of minutes.

16. At the time of the below-copied activity from the Martin County investigation described herein, it was not publicly known that Ms. Merker had any affiliation with or connection to Martin County Corruption Exposed.

12/16/2022 20:22:38	https://www.facebook.com/darkmoneymc?comment_id=Y29tbWVudDo0MzU2NjQxMTIwMzAwNzFFNDMxMTc4NjQ1ODI2MzA3	(1) Martin County Corruption Exposed Facebook
12/16/2022 20:22:42	https://www.facebook.com/darkmoneymc/about	(1) Martin County Corruption Exposed Facebook
12/16/2022 20:22:51	https://www.facebook.com/darkmoneymc/about_profile_transparency	(1) Martin County Corruption Exposed Facebook
12/16/2022 20:22:52	https://www.facebook.com/darkmoneymc/about_contact_and_basic_info	(1) Martin County Corruption Exposed Facebook
12/16/2022 20:23:02	https://www.facebook.com/darkmoneymc	(1) Martin County Corruption Exposed Facebook
12/16/2022 20:24:04	https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=sarah%20merker	(1) sarah merker - Search Results Facebook
12/16/2022 20:24:13	https://www.facebook.com/search/people/?q=sarah%20merker&sde=AbqizIMZvOv8dseN-6DUg_LZkFp8aVYRIKoYVJS8Qh3ZWjcmWMTMI3QJ5EXhf	(1) sarah merker - Search Results Facebook
12/16/2022 20:24:25	https://www.facebook.com/sarah.merker.3	(1) Sarah Merker Facebook
12/16/2022 20:24:51	https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100012985962397	(1) Sarah Merker Facebook
12/16/2022 20:25:11	https://www.facebook.com/sarah.mehringkottler	(1) Sarah Merker Facebook
12/16/2022 20:25:32	https://www.facebook.com/sarah.merker.3958	(1) Sarah Merker Facebook
12/16/2022 20:25:40	https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100080500734664	(1) Sarah Merker Facebook

“Martin County Corruption Exposed” Falsely Accuses Mr. Leighton and His Family of Illegal Acts

17. As evidenced by the very name of the Facebook page, the author of “Martin County Corruption Exposed” characterized even limited development of private property not as an outcome of the County’s public policy decision-making ultimately attributable to its voters, but as the result of illegal, corrupt actions carried out by various targets of the page’s ire.

18. *Black’s Law Dictionary* (2nd Edition) defines “corruption” as follows, in relevant part: “Illegality; a vicious and fraudulent intention to evade the prohibitions of the law.” The Florida Statutes’ references to the term “corruption” plainly denote illegality, *see, e.g.*, § 104.061(1), Fla. Stat. (“Whoever by bribery, menace, threat, or other corruption...”); § 838.021(2), Fla. Stat. (equating corruption to “unlawful[] influence”).

19. Representative of the “Martin County Corruption Exposed” author’s worldview is a Facebook post, dated August 7, 2022, attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.

20. In this post, the author identified nearly 30 local individuals and entities—property owners, corporations (ranging from a bamboo nursery to Martin Memorial Health Systems), law firms, consultants, and even the Martin County Supervisor of Elections—responsible for “bribes and kickbacks” in support of a proposed local development known as Calusa Creek.

21. Among these listed entities is Leighton Construction, a company owned and operated by Mr. Leighton's family.

22. Indeed, from some of its earliest posts, the "Martin County Corruption Exposed" Facebook page focused its wild allegations of criminality, with a peculiar degree of obsession, on Mr. Leighton and his family.

23. In an August 16, 2022 "Martin County Corruption Exposed" Facebook post, attached hereto as **Exhibit B**, the author alleged the "Leighton famil[y]" was one of "the first contributors to our local Future PAC [sic] that we have shown facilitating bribes to commissioners for developers since 2006."

24. Mr. Leighton, a former detective, is employed as a part-time law enforcement officer with the MCSO.

25. A lifelong resident of Martin County, Mr. Leighton has founded several small businesses still serving the residents of Martin County.

26. Mr. Leighton is also employed as chief of staff to U.S. Representative Brian Mast. As chief of staff, Mr. Leighton's employment is entirely "behind-the-scenes"; he does not appear in the media as a spokesman for Congressman Mast, nor does he otherwise publicly opine on matters of politics or policy, including Martin County's policies regarding property development.

27. Despite these facts, in a "Martin County Watchdog Post" dated September 4, 2022, attached hereto as **Exhibit C**, the Facebook page's author—identifying Mr. Leighton individually, by name—accused Mr. Leighton as participating in "corruption" whereby his MCSO job was a quid pro quo for a \$4000 donation to the campaign of Martin County Sheriff William Snyder.

28. In this series of Facebook posts comprising Exhibits A through C, the author alleged that Mr. Leighton participated in various other corrupt practices, including via conduct in relation

to his ex-wife, Kellie Glass Leighton's, alleged employment with Florida State Representative Toby Overdorf.

29. Section 838.015 of the Florida Statutes defines the offense of "bribery," in relevant part, as "to knowingly and intentionally give, offer, or promise to any public servant ... any pecuniary or other benefit not authorized by law with an intent or purpose to influence the performance of any act or omission which the person believes to be [] within the official discretion of a public servant, in violation of a public duty, or in performance of a public duty." Bribery is a second-degree felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison. § 775.082, Fla. Stat.

30. Any allegation that Mr. Leighton has ever engaged in bribery or corruption in his individual capacity, in concert with any member of his family, in concert or through any entity owned by Mr. Leighton and/or his family, or in any other manner, is unequivocally false.

**Ms. Merker is Identified as the Author and Publisher of the
"Martin County Corruption Exposed" Facebook Page**

31. Upon being made aware of the false accusations of illegality against him and his family, Mr. Leighton, through counsel on February 21, 2023, filed a *Complaint for Pure Bill of Discovery* in this Court, seeking to discover the identity of the person or persons responsible for the unsigned, anonymous Facebook posts on the "Martin County Corruption Exposed" page.

32. As a result of filing the lawsuit, Meta Platforms, Inc., doing business as Facebook, provided Mr. Leighton with metadata regarding the "Martin County Corruption Exposed" page and the operator of the page. Based on this information, and upon continued investigation, Mr. Leighton learned that Ms. Merker was the individual behind the Facebook page, and the author of the false posts alleging Mr. Leighton had engaged in illegal activity.

33. At some point following the filing of the suit, Ms. Merker, realizing that her identity would soon be revealed, changed the name of the Facebook page from “Martin County Corruption Exposed” to “Martin County Watchdog.”

34. This name change reflects a transparent recognition and acknowledgement, on Ms. Merker’s behalf, that the false accusations of “corruption” against Mr. Leighton were actionable under controlling Florida law.

35. Still, Ms. Merker did not stop her campaign of allegations and insinuations against Mr. Leighton, continuing to associate him, by name, with various labyrinths of imagined conspiracy and corruption she herself characterized as “rabbit hole[s].”

36. In a comment on one October 2023 post (somehow) referencing Mr. Leighton in connection with an IRS raid of a local payroll processing company Mr. Leighton had no involvement or association with, Ms. Merker, under the “Martin County Watchdog” moniker, replied: “It’s unfortunate that Stephen Leighton’s feathers are so ruffled he’s trying to sue me for ‘defamation’ when it’s undeniable how hard I’ve worked to put this information and together and connect the dots.” A copy of this comment is attached hereto as **Exhibit D**.

37. In yet another “Martin County Watchdog” post, this one from April of 2024, Ms. Merker falsely accused Mr. Leighton of impropriety by using the address of his place of employment—the MCSO—as the registered address for two of his small businesses. To this post, Ms. Merker attached screenshots of business tax account records displaying various information related to Mr. Leighton’s businesses. A copy of this post is attached hereto as **Exhibit E**.

The County Investigates Michael Merker

38. Mr. Merker has attempted to distance himself from Ms. Merker and “Martin County Corruption Exposed” by representing to the media and others that he and his daughter are not close and do not communicate with any level of frequency.

39. Mr. Merker’s representations about his lack of connection to his daughter are false, misleading, and designed to avoid liability for the conspiratorial acts and assistance that Mr. Merker provided to his daughter to further the campaign of lies and falsehoods publicized on the Facebook pages described herein.

40. Indeed, Mr. Merker and his daughter lived together for at least some of the period of time material to this action.

41. At all times material to this action, Mr. Merker was employed by Martin County as the County’s Chief Information Officer, responsible for overseeing information systems and technology administration across all County agencies.

42. On information and belief, various Martin County officials became alarmed by documents and information on which certain “Martin County Corruption Exposed” / “Martin County Watchdog” Facebook posts relied, believing that some of these records included internal or confidential taxpayer information not available as public records.

43. On information and belief, upon becoming aware that Ms. Merker was behind the false Facebook pages and posts, these Martin County officials began to suspect that Ms. Merker was using her father’s access to internal County documents and information to serve as the basis for her false Facebook posts, and as a result, Martin County began a formal investigation of Mr. Merker and reassigned him (temporarily or permanently) to a position where he could no longer access such confidential records.

44. The results of the investigation revealed that Mr. Merker was accessing Facebook accounts, including “Martin County Corruption Exposed,” from his government-issued electronic devices.

45. All conditions precedent to this action have been satisfied by Mr. Leighton, or otherwise have occurred or have been waived.

46. Mr. Leighton has retained the undersigned counsel for purposes of bringing and maintaining this action, and is obligated to pay counsel a reasonable fee for its services.

COUNT I
(Defamation Per Se—Sarah Merker)

47. Mr. Leighton incorporates paragraphs 1 through 46 as if fully re-stated herein.

48. This is an action for damages by Mr. Leighton, against Ms. Merker, for defamation per se.

49. Via the “Martin County Corruption Exposed” and “Martin County Watchdog” pages and posts referenced herein, Ms. Merker published false claims that Mr. Leighton has engaged in bribery, corruption, and other acts of illegality.

50. In publishing these Facebook posts, Ms. Merker therefore charges that Mr. Leighton has committed, and is regularly committing, felony offenses under Florida law, which false accusations are intended to subject Mr. Leighton to hatred, disgust, ridicule, contempt, or disgrace, in the eyes of the community, and to injure Mr. Leighton’s reputation, livelihood, well-being, and ability to practice his profession.

51. Ms. Merker published these false allegations with knowledge that they are false, or with reckless disregard for whether they were false.

WHEREFORE, Mr. Leighton requests the following relief:

- (a) Entry of final judgment in Mr. Leighton's favor, and against Ms. Merker, adjudging that Ms. Merker's false Facebook posts are defamatory per se;
- (b) An award of damages resulting from Ms. Merker's defamatory publications;
- (c) Upon proper proffer of evidence to the Court, and a demonstration of entitlement via clear and convincing evidence of intentional misconduct, an award of punitive damages in favor of Mr. Leighton, and against Ms. Merker;
- (d) An award of costs incurred in obtaining this relief, and as special damages, an award of attorneys' fees incurred by Mr. Leighton in obtaining this relief; and
- (e) Such other relief as this Court deems just.

COUNT II
(Defamation—Sarah Merker)

52. Mr. Leighton incorporates paragraphs 1 through 46 as if fully re-stated herein.

53. This is an action for damages by Mr. Leighton, against Ms. Merker, for defamation.

54. Via the "Martin County Corruption Exposed" and "Martin County Watchdog" pages and posts referenced herein, Ms. Merker published false claims that Mr. Leighton has engaged in bribery, corruption, and other acts of illegality.

55. Ms. Merker's allegations are false, and she published them with knowledge that, or reckless disregard for whether, they were false.

56. Ms. Merker's published allegations against Mr. Leighton tend to harm his reputation by lowering it in the estimation of the community, and by deterring third parties from dealing with Mr. Leighton and his affiliated entities.

57. As a result, Mr. Leighton has suffered damages which include, but are not limited to, costs incurred and expended in mitigating the reputational injury caused by Ms. Merker's false publications.

WHEREFORE, Mr. Leighton requests the following relief:

- (a) Entry of final judgment in Mr. Leighton's favor, and against Ms. Merker, adjudging that Ms. Merker's false Facebook posts are defamatory;
- (b) An award of damages resulting from Ms. Merker's defamatory publications;
- (c) Upon proper proffer of evidence to the Court, and a demonstration of entitlement via clear and convincing evidence of intentional misconduct, an award of punitive damages in favor of Mr. Leighton, and against Ms. Merker;
- (d) An award of costs incurred in obtaining this relief, and as special damages, an award of attorneys' fees incurred by Mr. Leighton in obtaining this relief; and
- (e) Such other relief as this Court deems just.

COUNT III
(Conspiracy to Defame—Sarah Merker and Michael Merker)

58. Mr. Leighton incorporates paragraphs 1 through 46 as if fully re-stated herein.

59. This is an action for damages by Mr. Leighton, against both Defendants (Sarah Merker and Michael Merker) for conspiracy to defame Mr. Leighton.

60. Via the "Martin County Corruption Exposed" and "Martin County Watchdog" pages and posts referenced herein, Ms. Merker published false claims that Mr. Leighton has engaged in bribery, corruption, and other acts of illegality.

61. Ms. Merker's allegations are false, and she published them with knowledge that, or reckless disregard for whether, they were false.

62. By granting, or allowing, his daughter improper use of documents and information to which he had access via his government employment, Mr. Merker conspired with Ms. Merker to unlawfully defame Mr. Leighton, which conspiracy both Defendants undertook via the overt acts described herein.

63. Mr. Merker's conduct, as alleged herein, was undertaken in bad faith, and/or with a malicious purpose, with regard to Mr. Leighton.

64. Moreover, Mr. Merker's conduct, as alleged herein, was outside the scope of his duties as an employee of Martin County, in that his actions had no official purpose, were motivated by private or personal reasons, and were not the type of conduct which Martin County had hired and employed Mr. Merker to perform.

65. Defendants' acts undertaken in furtherance of their conspiracy to defame Mr. Leighton have harmed his reputation by lowering it in the estimation of the community, and by deterring third parties from dealing with Mr. Leighton and his affiliated entities.

66. As a result, Mr. Leighton has suffered damages which include, but are not limited to, costs incurred and expended in mitigating the reputational injury caused by Defendants' conspiracy to defame Mr. Leighton.

WHEREFORE, Mr. Leighton requests the following relief:

- (a) Entry of final judgment in Mr. Leighton's favor, and against Defendants, adjudging that Defendants conspired to defame Mr. Leighton;
- (b) An award of damages resulting from Defendants' acts undertaken in furtherance of the conspiracy to defame Mr. Leighton;
- (c) Upon proper proffer of evidence to the Court, and a demonstration of entitlement via clear and convincing evidence of intentional misconduct, an award of punitive damages in favor of Mr. Leighton, and against Defendants;
- (d) An award of costs incurred in obtaining this relief, and as special damages, an award of attorneys' fees incurred by Mr. Leighton in obtaining this relief; and
- (e) Such other relief as this Court deems just.

COUNT IV
(Aiding and Abetting Defamation—Michael Merker)

67. Mr. Leighton incorporates paragraphs 1 through 46 as if fully re-stated herein.

68. This is an action for damages by Mr. Leighton, against Defendant Michael Merker, for aiding and abetting Ms. Merker's defamation of Mr. Leighton.

69. Via the “Martin County Corruption Exposed” and “Martin County Watchdog” pages and posts referenced herein, Ms. Merker published false claims that Mr. Leighton has engaged in bribery, corruption, and other acts of illegality.

70. Ms. Merker’s allegations are false, and she published them with knowledge that, or reckless disregard for whether, they were false.

71. Ms. Merker’s published allegations against Mr. Leighton tend to harm his reputation by lowering it in the estimation of the community, and by deterring third parties from dealing with Mr. Leighton and his affiliated entities.

72. By granting, or allowing, his daughter improper use of documents and information to which he had access via his government employment, Mr. Merker assisted Ms. Merker’s unlawful, wrongful, and tortious defamation of Mr. Leighton.

73. Mr. Merker’s assisting of his daughter’s efforts was substantial.

74. Mr. Merker was aware of his role in Ms. Merker’s unlawful, wrongful, and tortious activity at the time he provided his assistance.

75. Mr. Merker’s conduct, as alleged herein, was undertaken in bad faith, and/or with a malicious purpose, with regard to Mr. Leighton.

76. Moreover, Mr. Merker’s conduct, as alleged herein, was outside the scope of his duties as an employee of Martin County, in that his actions had no official purpose, were motivated by private or personal reasons, and were not the type of conduct which Martin County had hired and employed Mr. Merker to perform.

77. As a result of Ms. Merker's conduct and Mr. Merker's assistance in that conduct, Mr. Leighton has suffered damages which include, but are not limited to, costs incurred and expended in mitigating the reputational injury caused by Ms. Merker's false publications.

WHEREFORE, Mr. Leighton requests the following relief:

- (a) Entry of final judgment in Mr. Leighton's favor, and against Mr. Merker, adjudging that Mr. Merker aided and abetted Ms. Merker's defamation of Mr. Leighton;
- (b) An award of damages resulting from Mr. Merker's acts undertaken in assistance of Ms. Merker's defamation of Mr. Leighton;
- (c) Upon proper proffer of evidence to the Court, and a demonstration of entitlement via clear and convincing evidence of intentional misconduct, an award of punitive damages in favor of Mr. Leighton, and against Mr. Merker;
- (d) An award of costs incurred in obtaining this relief, and as special damages, an award of attorneys' fees incurred by Mr. Leighton in obtaining this relief; and
- (e) Such other relief as this Court deems just.

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DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff hereby demands trial by jury on all claims and issues so triable.

DATED: August 1, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ **Ethan J. Loeb**

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EXHIBIT A

COPY

**Martin County Watchdog**

August 7, 2022 · 🌐



As promised, here are the *now* missing Future PAC contributions related to Calusa Creek that suddenly have disappeared from the Martin County Supervisor of Elections website since public discussion about bribes and kickbacks has commenced. Let's unpack it all starting from January of 2006, when the records are SUPPOSED to begin.

On January 4, 2006, there were 12 contributions made, all of them for \$500 from:

1. Fairview South, Inc. (Knight Kiplinger, prominent MC landowner, CEO, and business media fortune heir)
2. North Stuart Centre- (Archie Hendry III and David Satur located at 656 Buck Hendry Way and one of several shell companies listed there -see Sunbiz screenshot)
3. Thomas Lucido & Associates (who in 2009 drew up plans to manipulate the existing Calusa Creek assigned agricultural land use to a mixed one, claiming there to be over 1,000 acres of "developable area" - see screenshots and NAI Southcoast listing attached)
4. Floyd Jordan, Royal Palm Financial Center (business partner of Bruner Real Estate located and Indiantown Industrial Park, see sunbiz page filing document- questionable relationship with City of Stuart commissioner Becky Bruner who is now cashing in on her family business since 2017 with the growth that is erupting coincidentally after she became elected)
5. Knickerbocker, LLC (shell company for Knickerbocker Management, Finn Casperson)
6. The Floridian Golf Club - AKA Huizenga Holdings AKA BlockBuster and Waste Management billionaire businessman H. Wayne Huizenga, father of Wayne Huizenga Jr. and Pamela Alexander AKA Pamela Van Hart AKA Pamela Huizenga, owner of Colab Farms and Colab Kitchen (among many others, more on that later).
7. EW Consultants (Ed Weinberg, controversial and evidently unethical environmental consultant who was contracted to the City of Stuart while working for developers despite these multiple conflicts of interest brought to the city's attention)
8. Calusa Creek Tree Farm and Ranch (land owner) - AKA New Shoots Bamboo Nursery, a 3900 acre farm up for sale for \$50 million with NAI Southcoast. Yet is being advertised by McNicholas & Associates as "Florida's last greatest ranch" on paid-for FB ads.

Source for \$50 million listing by Nikolaus "Nik" Schroth of NAI Southcoast Real Estate with Land Plans by Lucido & Associates to develop over 1,000 acres for 600+ homes:

<https://properties.naisouthcoast.com/.../calusa-creek...>

9. Centex Homes AKA Pulte Homes. (wonder what for?)
10. Hill, Barth & King (also known as HBK, accounting and tax firm)
11. Corsair Capital Corporation (listed director is Daniel Morris who is also director of Monterrey Commons Center and started up with Dean Kohl Jr. and Charles Sabin, formerly of Charles Sabin Construction Co., Inc.)
12. LBFH, Inc.(Engineering consultant aka Boyle Engineering whose listed address has now become what is Grand Oaks of Palm City at 3550 SW Corporate Parkway)

Then the rest of the contributions were split up over the next month likely as an attempt to avoid suspicion, though the uniform \$500 is kind of a dead giveaway, isn't it?





14. TEAM Construction (whose address is now Hartman Real Estate at 3500 SE Corporate Parkway in Palm City)

15. Stuart Jet Center, LLC. (now Atlantic Aviation)

16. Maiucci Enterprises (real estate developers)

17. CAPTEC Engineering (Joe Capra, also contracted to the City of Stuart and a main endorser for Stuart Commissioner Troy McDonald)

18. Houston Cuzzo Group, Inc. (now operating separately but equally as HJA Design Studio and Cuzzo Planning - both are former business associates of Deanna Freeman, who worked for Martin County on and off since 2006, as well as her husband Kevin Freeman.

Kev Freeman is the recently disgraced and resigned City of Stuart Development Director (now with the city of Fort Pierce) whose testimony and work was deemed as "not professionally acceptable" by DOAH Judge Francine Ffolkes in the hearing over the Costco development. More on the Freemans here (and much more to come since Deanna Freeman has deleted her LinkedIn page):

<https://martincounty.news/2022/02/09/conflict-of-interest/>

Cuzzo Planning and HJA Design Studio are also two of the most popular land planning firms used by Treasure Coast developers.

Michael Houston currently serves on the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council which "approves" many of the developments in the County, and city/county commissioners claim to base their own approvals on that approval (how convenient).

Last group of missing January-February 2006 Future PAC contributions:

19. Nichols Sanitation (sold to Waste Management, now known as WM Hobe Sound Hauling)

20. Unruh Consulting, Inc. (more to come on Hugo Unruh and his wife Patricia)

21. RAM Development Company - see members here:

<https://search.sunbiz.org/Inquiry/CorporationSearch/SearchResultDetail?inquirytype=EntityName&directionType=Initial&searchNameOrder=RAMDEVELOPMENT%20P960000946101&aggregateld=domp-p96000094610-d7f4bad7-1471-45ed-be9e-a8415792f44b&searchTerm=ram%20development&listNameOrder=RAMDEVELOPMENT%203172500>

22. McNicholas & Associates (whose other clients include many Future PAC and C-PAC contributors such as Waste Management):

source: <https://www.mcnicholas.biz/about/our-community-commitment/>

23. Leighton Construction

24. Premier Realty Group

25. Martin Memorial Health Systems (they might need to put some kind of medical facility out in a 4,000 acre new urban district, eh?)

26. Mracheck, Page, Fitzgerald, & Rose. (law firm located in same building as Gunster, Corsair, Hill Barth & King)

Let the pictures and facts speak for themselves and come to your own conclusions. But I think it's clear why they don't want people knowing about this.

New Shoots Bamboo Nursery Website:

<https://www.newshootsbamboo.com/...>

New Shoots Bamboo Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NewShootsBambooNursery/>





Calusa Creek Facebook run by McNicholas: <https://www.facebook.com/calusacreek>

artlinevotes.gov/candidate-committee-information/finance-reports/

Select Language
Powered by Google Translate

Voter Information Election Information Candidate/Committee Info

Committee: Future PAC

Office: Committees/Parties

Report Date: Q1 (1/1/2009 - 3/31/2009)

The following financial reports are available:

Report	View	Transact	Amount
F1			\$0.00
(7/1/2006 - 9/30/2006)			
F2			\$0.00
(7/1/2006 - 8/31/2006)			
F3			\$500.00
(8/1/2006 - 3/31/2006)			
F3			\$0.00
(8/1/2006 - 8/31/2006) Amended			
G1			\$0.00
(9/1/2006 - 5/15/2006)			
G2			\$0.00
(9/1/2006 - 9/29/2006)			
G3			\$0.00
(9/30/2006 - 10/12/2006)			
G4			\$200.00
(11/1/2006 - 11/2/2006)			
F1			\$4,450.00
(4/1/2008 - 7/31/2008)			
F1			\$0.00
(4/1/2008 - 7/16/2008) Amended			

Campaign Treasurer's Report - Itemized Contributions					
Seq#	Contributor	Entity	Occupation	Cont. Type	Amount
Date					
#1	Fairview South, Inc.	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/4/2006	2400 South Federal Highway Suite 300 Stuart FL 34994-4531				\$500.00
#2	North Stuart Centre	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/4/2006	656 Buck Hendry Lane Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
#3	Thomas Lucido & Associates	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/4/2006	701 East Ocean Boulevard Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
#4	Floyd Jordan	Individual	Unknown	Check	
1/4/2006	Royal Palm Financial Center 3 759 South Federal FL Highway Stuart 34994				\$500.00
#5	Knickerbocker LLC	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/4/2006	11450 SE Dixie Highway Hobbs Sound FL 33455				\$500.00

Seq#	Contributor	Entity	Occupation	Cont. Type	Amount
Date					
#1	EV Consultants, Inc.	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/4/2006	2081 SE Ocean Boulevard Suite 20 Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
#8	Calusa Creek Tree Farm and Ranch	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/4/2006	4205 Southwest Lamar Highway Stuart FL 34997				\$500.00
#9	Centex Homes	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/4/2006	8198 Jpg Road Suite 200 Boynton Beach FL 33437				\$500.00
#10	Wick Martin & King LLC	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/5/2006	1000 SE Montrose Commons Blvd Suite 101 Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
#11	Simon Capital Corporation	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/5/2006	1800 SE Montrose Commons Blvd Suite 300 Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
#12	187th, Inc.	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/5/2006	2252 W Corporate Parkway Palm City FL 34990				\$500.00
#13	James Tinkley & Associates PA	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/9/2006	880 SE Montrose Commons Blvd Suite 200 Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
#14	CAH Construction	Business	Unknown	Check	

Seq#	Contributor	Entity	Occupation	Cont. Type	Amount
Date					
#15	187th, Inc.	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/9/2006	2252 W Corporate Parkway Palm City FL 34990				\$500.00
#17	Curric Engineering	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/9/2006	300 SW St. Lane Avenue Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
#18	Heaton, Cocco, Gray, Inc.	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/11/2006	2400 SE Federal Highway Suite 300 Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
#19	North Stuart Center	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/17/2006	7700 SE Bridge Road Hobbs Sound FL 33455				\$500.00
#20	Uppah Consulting, Inc.	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/18/2006	Post Office Box 1200 Stuart FL 34995				\$150.00
#21	RAH Development Company	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/23/2006	3209 PGA Blvd Suite 450 Palm Beach Gardens FL 33405				\$150.00
#22	McNicholas S. Associates	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/25/2006	410 Pennington Avenue Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
#23	Longhorn Construction	Business	Unknown	Check	
1/27/2006	Post Office Box 1273 Stuart FL 34995				\$500.00

Seq#	Contributor	Entity	Occupation	Cont. Type	Amount
Date					
#25	North Stuart Center	Business	Unknown	Check	
2/6/2006	202 Hospital Avenue Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
#26	McNicholas, Pugh, Fitzgerald & Rose, P.A.	Business	Unknown	Check	
2/14/2006	1900 SE Montrose Commons Blvd Suite 200 Stuart FL 34994				\$500.00
Total Contributions					\$13,000.00
Campaign Treasurer's Report - In-Kind Contributions					
Seq#	Contributor	Entity	Occupation	In-Kind Description	Amount
Date					
Total In-Kind Contributions					\$0.00
Campaign Treasurer's Report - Itemized Expenditures					
Seq#	Vendor	Purpose	Exp. Type	Amount	
Date					
Total Expenditures					\$0.00

20

20 shares

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EXHIBIT B

COPY



Edit History

August 16, 2022



6 reactions on this version



Martin County Watchdog

If you want to fight the onslaught of overdevelopment and destruction of everything we hold precious, PLEASE consider the following:

The land sold for the new Old Palm City development (brought before the Old Palm City NAC last night) was originally put on the market by Hartman Real Estate, then sold by Leighton Realty (see screenshot).

This is critical to understand because you will find both of these family names tracing back decades in this town financially influencing our politicians, hence why Leighton and Hartman were two of the first contributors to our local Future PAC that we have shown facilitating bribes to commissioners for developers since 2006.

In fact, District 5 commissioner Ed Ciampi referred to John Leighton as the "man who started it all" while wishing him a happy 80th birthday on a recent Facebook post (see screenshot).

Also important to know: From 2015-2019, City of Stuart Commissioner Michael "Mike" Meier was co-owner of Ground Floor Farm with his two best friends and business partners, Jacqueline "Jackie" Vitale, and Micah Hartman.

Both Vitale and Hartman have families in real estate and the Hartmans are doing especially well lately, as you can see by all of the Hartman Real Estate signs marking green space (or what once was) everywhere now slated for development.

After years of failed plans not meeting building or environmental requirements, Costco gave up after 3 rounds with County Staff in Palm City in early 2017.

That summer, on August 26, 2017 a listing for what would become one of the parcels slated for the Stuart Costco was put up for sale by Hartman Real Estate, specifically by Peter Hartman, Micah Hartman's father.

The listing was entitled: "11.9+/- Acre Development Site Fronting Two Major Roads."**

Peter Hartman also claimed it to be an "Excellent site for retail/commercial or residential development with 350± feet on S Kanner Hwy and 50± on SE Willoughby Blvd.

The property can be combined with an additional 36 acres to the south providing a total of 47± acres. Recently annexed into the City of Stuart with many different uses available."**(see links and photos attached)

Take note, this was before any due process had commenced for the zoning or land use to change after the city annexed it as low-density agricultural without assigning any new uses.

So why was Peter Hartman so confident in promising this kind of development without any due process decisions yet?

Follow the money and the relationships because time will always tell.

Ed Ciampi's daughter posted about her father's rather officious interference with Costco in Palm City and how he "used his own money to fly all the way to Seattle to meet with the executives of Costco & negotiate on behalf of the best interest of everyone who calls Martin County home" September 2017.

In March of 2018, former City Commissioner Tom Campenni stepped down after threatening the former city manager Dave Ross who called him out for breaking commissioner ethics by trying to secretly attend a Stuart staff meeting with Costco in February of 2018.

March 9, 2018 article mentions it here:

<https://www.tcpalm.com/.../stuart-commissioner.../410036002/>

By March 28, 2018, Mike Meier had filed to run for Stuart commissioner (see contributions from Vitale, Campenni & Hartman attached).

Campenni has since claimed that he is financially "invested" in Meier's success (see screenshot).

On June 4, 2018, the billionaire heiress of Waste Management and Blockbuster (among others), Pamela Huizenga Alexander started her Colab Farms in Indiantown.

Huizenga and her family have both been represented by Gunster/Bob Raynes (attorney for Costco developers) in the past regarding land use changes and other matters with the City/County (see attached).

The Huizenga, Hartman, and Leighton families have all made appearances in our local PACs that have led to developments. And they all have a close relationship with Bob Raynes, the MC fixer.

In a July 24th, 2018 article, Stuart Commissioner Troy McDonald mentioned Costco's new interest in Stuart:

"There's no application yet, but I have a feeling it's going to happen,' Stuart Commissioner Troy McDonald said Tuesday. 'The buzz in the real estate world is that (Costco) has been negotiating the purchase of the property for the site.'

"Store representatives at the time said Costco would seek out another location, possibly still on the Treasure Coast — a statement that piqued the interest of officials in Port St. Lucie and Stuart who promised they would make development easier than Martin County did.

The Stuart properties said to be under consideration by Costco are actually recent additions to the city.

The three parcels fronting Kanner — between Lychee Tree Nursery, which is next door to Martin County High School, and the proposed assisted-living facility — were annexed into the city between August 2016 and January 2017 at the request of David Nehme, one of the property owners.

"Nehme, in his annexation application, said he would prefer to work with the city than with the county.

'We feel the flexibility of dealing with the city will result in a better project,' he said, according to city records.

"Should Costco move forward with a Stuart location, it would submit an application to the city and then would need approvals from the Local Planning Agency and the City Commission.

source: <https://www.tcpalm.com/.../costco-serious.../825869002/>

On March 3, 2019, Ground Floor Farm (Meier, Hartman, and Vitale) and Colab Farms (Huizenga) announced a merger for Colab Farms and Colab Kitchen (screenshot).

On November 17, 2020, Ed Ciampi appointed Ransom "Reed" Hartman as the District 5 LPA board member for Martin County (screenshot).

On January 25, 2021 Mike Meier used his position as commissioner to appoint his best friend and business partner Jackie Vitale to the Stuart LPA (screenshot).

No conflicts of interest were disclosed. Also note that Meier also used his position to appoint Tom Campenni to the CRB and has kept him there despite outcries from the public about conflicts of interest and unethical behavior from Mr. Campenni.

When Costco was brought to the Stuart LPA right after that in April of 2021, despite the objections from nearly 80 residents about the inevitable negative impacts on our environment and quality of life (as well as pointing out flawed plans used), Jackie Vitale was the one who brought the motion for approval.

The Stuart commission including Meier also went on to approve it unanimously twice despite record turnout and having to host the August 9, 2021 meeting at the Blake Library in order to accommodate the naysayers standing up for their community.

A month after the second reading and approval, Rick Hartman wrote a rather hubristic piece about the "consequences" Martin County/Stuart ended up with by not allowing Costco in Palm City, despite it being Costco's fault for failing to adhere to the Comp Plan three times.

In a somewhat threatening manner, Rick Hartman claims "Palm City's lesson in consequences we all will share."

See One Martin/Hartman September 2021 article blog here:

Three months later, Peter Hartman (Micah Hartman's father) sold the 2017 parcel to Costco developers for \$3.78M in December 2021.

It is one thing to infringe on our due process for profit but for Rick Hartman to gloat about it publicly is actually quite scary. Especially when you consider the company that the Hartmans keep, which happens to be several of your local elected officials and community leaders.

****Hartman Real Estate Brochure:**

****2017 Peter Hartman Loopnet Listing:**

<https://www.loopnet.com/.../3153-S-Kanner-Hwy.../8855611/>

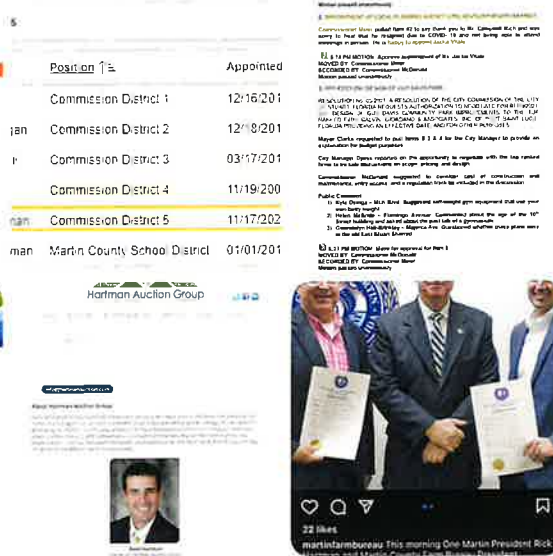




 Martin County Watchdog

The land sold for the new Old Palm City development (brought before the Old Palm City NAC last night) was originally put on ... [See more](#)



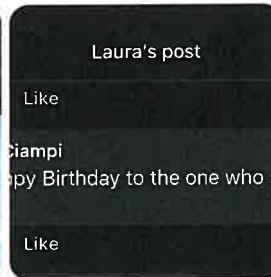


August 16, 2022

**Martin County Watchdog**

If you want to fight the onslaught of overdevelopment and destruction of everything we hold precious, PLEASE consider the following:

The land sold for the new Old Palm City development (brought before the Old Palm City NAC last night) was originally put on ... **See more**



PROPERTY INFORMATION

LOCATION: 11111 1st Ave NE, Unit 100, Everett, WA 98201

APPLICANT: [Name]

DATE: 11/17/23

PROJECT: [Project Name]

COMMUNITY: [Community Name]

UTILITIES: [Utilities]

TRAIL: [Trail]

PRICE: [Price]

COMMENTS: [Comments]

Over the past year, I have watched my dad work tirelessly to do the right thing by his constituents & handle such a contentious issue for Martin County. I wish I had his level of resilience & confidence, but I would get so emotional when I would see someone tear him down when they didn't understand the process of government or witness firsthand the time & effort he was dedicating. I bit my tongue countless times, wanting to defend this person that I love beyond words. This summer, my dad used his own money to fly all the way to Seattle to meet with the executives of Costco & negotiate on behalf of the best interest of everyone who calls Martin County home & yet, he did so silently, not looking for any credit, continuing to yield criticism. Today, it was announced that the Costco that was intended for Palm City will not be built at that location. I am so proud of my dad & the lessons he continues to teach me about doing the right thing even when no one is there to validate you. I love you, Dad.

CAMPAIGN TREASURER'S REPORT - ITEMIZED

Name: Michael Meier

Cover Period: 04/01/18 through 04/30/18

Report: [Report Content]

IGN TREASURER'S REPORT - ITEMIZED CONTRIBUTION

Name: Michael Meier

Report: [Report Content]

IGN TREASURER'S REPORT - ITEMIZED CONTRIBUTION

Name: Michael Meier

Report: [Report Content]

CAMPAIGN TREASURER'S REPORT - ITEMIZED CONTRIBUTION

Name: Michael Meier

Report: [Report Content]

couple of things. The closing costs become substantially less for me. I require such as application fees. The buyer can save one person no loan to value calculations that may prevent a buyer from getting a loan.

I know well. I don't have to worry about not receiving my 20% rate. I receive while comparable to what a bank would charge. This is not a business for me. I know what the financial is. Two of my kids and Mike Meier are examples of young people.



IndianTown CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

NAME	POSITION	APPOINTED
John Meier	Commission District 1	12/16/2011
John Meier	Commission District 2	12/18/2011
John Meier	Commission District 3	03/17/2011
John Meier	Commission District 4	11/19/2010
John Meier	Commission District 5	11/17/2012
John Meier	Martin County School District	01/01/2011

zenga Holdings, Inc.

JIZENGA HOLDINGS

Main Point of Contact: Alex

Address: [Address]

Phone: [Phone]

Email: [Email]

zenga Holdings, Inc.

JIZENGA HOLDINGS

Main Point of Contact: Alex

Address: [Address]

Phone: [Phone]

Email: [Email]

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John Meier	Martin County School District	01/01/2011

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John Meier	Commission District 4	11/19/2010
John Meier	Commission District 5	11/17/2012
John Meier	Martin County School District	01/01/2011

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John Meier	Commission District 3	03/17/2011
John Meier	Commission District 4	11/19/2010
John Meier	Commission District 5	11/17/2012
John Meier	Martin County School District	01/01/2011





August 16, 2022

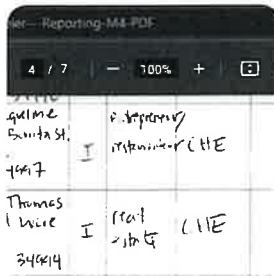
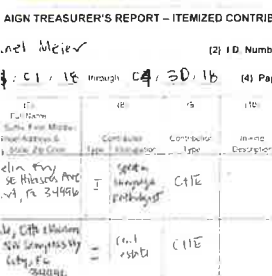
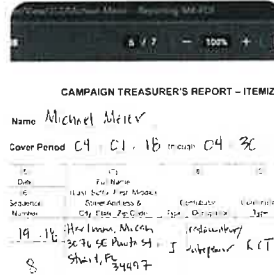
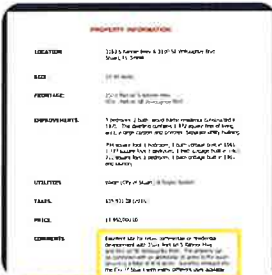
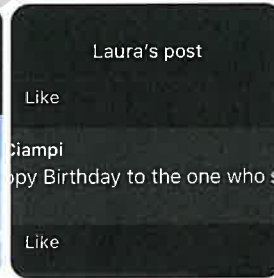
19 reactions on this version



Martin County Watchdog

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EXHIBIT C

COPY

**Martin County Watchdog**

September 4, 2022 · 🌐



We The People have uncovered a missing Scripps article that explains the quintessential good ol boy network of Martin County law enforcement and politics for those looking to understand just how it all works.

This article has been erased from Scripps/Gannett archives (no surprise there) but was found within a 111-page transcript of a deposition taken of Sheriff William Snyder after he and MCSO were sued for discrimination and wrongful termination of job position(s).

In fact, one of the first things Sheriff Snyder did during his first week after being elected into office was eliminate the position of victim advocates to make way for a new paid position personal friends and financial supporters such as **Stephen G. Leighton**, whose family gave \$4,000 to Snyder's campaign.

Read below and see screenshots of the exhibits/deposition attached. The corruption and discrimination is clear in his behavior and the manipulative way he tries to justify it in the deposition (he is listed as the Witness).

Eve Samples: Sheriff Snyder says this is 'not a bloodbath' -- but an overhaul

January 13, 2013 at 5:00 am.

"This had not been a bloodbath," the newly inaugurated Martin County sheriff told me during his fourth day on the job.

Less than a week into his tenure, Sheriff William Snyder already had eliminated the highest ranks within the agency (gone are the titles of colonel and major, except for one who will continue to oversee corrections).

With that, he demoted his former political rival, John "Ski" Pietruszewski, from major to a sergeant on the gun range.

Snyder also reassigned four civilian employees and about 15 law enforcement officers. Among them was legal adviser Terence Nolan, who has been replaced by newly hired Glenn Theobald, who will earn \$108,000 a year.

And he hired outsiders to serve as the faces of his agency in the community: former congressional aide **Steve Leighton**, who will fill a newly created "business and government affairs director" role and former TV reporter Christine Christofek, the sheriff's new public information officer.

Both **Leighton** and Christofek campaigned for Snyder and donated to his campaign.

"I need people next to me that share my vision and my passion for how I think this agency should look," Snyder said.

"That is the fundamental core essential ingredient in personnel selection -- to have people to my left, to my right, in front of me, behind me that agree with my direction."

I asked him what that direction was.

"My goal, my mission for this agency is that it be highly professional... motivated to good law enforcement and public safety," he answered.





No, he conceded. But they might disagree with his methods.

What are his methods?

"I think that's a question that's impossible to answer in a sound bite," Snyder said. "I think it's one of those things -- you know it when you see it."

We have seen more than a taste of it during his first week on the job.

Nobody has been fired since Snyder took office Tuesday. Career service law protects most workers from losing their jobs without cause.

But many have retired or been reassigned to less-appealing positions, creating an air of uncertainty over the agency that now-retired Sheriff Rober Crowder ran for 20 years.

"I'm not defending what I did," Snyder said. "I did what was right."

He explained that he eliminated the majors - except for the director of corrections, Maj. Casey Szparaga - because he wanted to have a closer working relationship with the rank-and-file:

"It would not have been easy for me to work through two levels of supervision - colonel and major - to get a division level," Snyder said, adding that he might bring the positions back later.

The seven captains who are now on his command staff got "administrative stipends" for picking up extra duties.

Even so, he estimates his top-level reorganization will save more than half a million dollars a year (though he is not including Leighton's position in that figure since he is not technically part of the command team).

Snyder's overhaul of the agency has been swift, and it has prompted cries of political favoritism.

I called his predecessor, Crowder, to ask what he thought of the chances at the agency he ran for so long.

Crowder was loath to criticize Snyder, even though the two have had their political differences. But he cautioned that the changes could damage morale.

"You know, once you win the election, then you have to forget about the past and let these people have an opportunity to reassign their loyalty and get in step with you," Crowder said.

Crowder practiced that philosophy back in 1993 when he hired Snyder after beating him in the previous year's sheriff's race.

"By and large, I didn't regret it," Crowder said.

But he conceded that the politics of the office can be a distraction.

"I really think the office of sheriff should be nonpartisan," he said.

Having walked this gauntlet during five terms, Crowder said he didn't think the internal changes would hurt public safety. But Crowder does think Snyder's shake-up will have one effect:

"It's going to generate opposition for him in the next election, I'm sure."





The Samples: Sheriff Snyder says this is 'not a bloodbath' — but an overhaul TCPalm

11/16/13 3:44 PM

TCPALM
Tallahassee, FL

Read more at tcpalm.com

Eve Samples: Sheriff Snyder says this is 'not a bloodbath' — but an overhaul

By Eve Samples

Originally published on October 13, 2013
Updated 10:05 p.m. January 15, 2015

"This has not been a bloodbath," the newly inaugurated Martin County sheriff told me during his fourth day on the job.

Less than a week into his tenure, Sheriff William Snyder already had eliminated the highest ranks within the agency (gone are the titles of colonel and major, except for one who will continue to oversee corrections).

With that, he demoted his former political rival, John "Ski" Piotruszewski, from major to a sergeant on the gun range.

Snyder also reassigned four civilian employees and about 15 law enforcement officers. Among them was legal adviser Terrence Nolan, who has been replaced by newly hired Glenn Theobald, who will earn \$108,000 a year.

And he hired outsiders to serve as the faces of his agency in the community: former congressional aide Steve Leighton, who will fill a newly created "business and government affairs director" role, and former TV reporter Christine Christofek, the sheriff's new public information officer.

Both Leighton and Christofek campaigned for Snyder and donated to his campaign.

"I need people next to me that share my vision and my passion for how I think this agency should look," Snyder said. "That is the fundamental core essential ingredient in personnel selection — to have people to my left, to my right, in front of me, behind me that agree with my direction."

13:49:00 Sheriff Snyder says this is 'not a bloodbath' — but an overhaul TCPalm

Yes, he conceded. But they might disagree with his methods.

What are his methods?

"I think that's a question that's impossible to answer in a sound bite," Snyder said. "I think it's one of those things — you know it when you see it."

We have seen more than a taste of it during his first week on the job.

Nobody has been fired since Snyder took office Tuesday. Snyder's office has protected most workers from being their jobs without cause.

But many have noticed he hasn't hesitated to have potentially political, leaving an air of uncertainty over the agency that has retained Sheriff Robert Crowder for 20 years.

Tom not detailing what it did? Snyder said: "I did what was right."

He explained that he dismissed the majors — except for the director of corrections, Maj. Casey Sprague — because he wanted to have a closer working relationship with the rank-and-file.

"It wasn't as hard as it seems for me to work through two levels of supervision — colonel and major — to get at a division level," Snyder said, adding that he might bring the positions back later.

The seven outsiders who are now on his command staff got "administrative experience" for posting up extra duties. Even so, he estimates his top-level reorganization will save more than half a million dollars a year (though he is not including Leighton's position in that figure since he is not technically part of the command team).

Snyder's overhaul of the agency has been swift, and it has prompted cries of political favoritism.

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13:49:00 Sheriff Snyder says this is 'not a bloodbath' — but an overhaul TCPalm

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But he cautioned that the politics of the office can be a distraction.

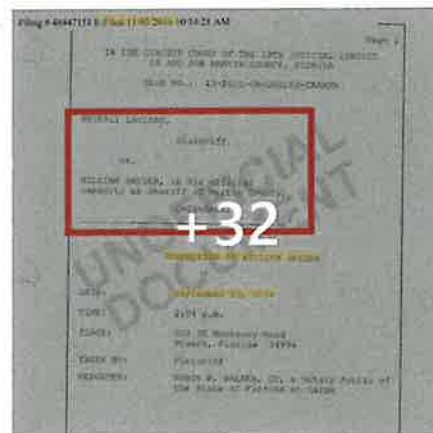
"I really think the office of sheriff should be nonpartisan," he said.

Having walked the grounds during his tenure, Crowder said he didn't think the internal changes would hurt public safety. But Crowder does think Snyder's shake-up will have one effect.

"It's going to generate opposition for him in the next election, I'm sure."

Eve Samples is a columnist for Suncoast Treasure Coast newspapers. This column reflects her opinion. Contact her at 772-221-4211 or eve.samples@suncoast.com.

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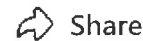
7 comments 14 shares



Like



Comment



All comments ▼



Write a comment...



Marie DeGrosa

That's a joke ... the sheriff's department is anything but nonpartisan.

1y Like Reply



Jorge White

Sheriff Snyder is grooming John Budensiek to be his replacement. Budensiek has a long history of falsifying reports and incidents with women that have been swept under the rug at the agency.

1y Like Reply





3



1



Author

Martin County Watchdog

Jorge White I believe it. Just like he groomed his son to replace him as a state rep.

I'll be looking into this for more concrete evidence. Feel free to message this page privately if there is anything else you would like to share. [OBJ]

1y Like Reply

**Michelle M Belle**

Shaking my head, how would sheriff respond today?

1y Like Reply



Author

Martin County Watchdog

Michelle M Belle I would not believe a single word that leaves his mouth, that's for sure. [OBJ]

1y Like Reply

**Mark Hill**

Did you dropped somethin'...?

1y Like Reply

**Suzanne East**

AP



1y Like Reply





Martin County Watchdog

August 15 · 🌐



Eve Samples: Sheriff Snyder says this is 'not a bloodbath' — but an overhaul | TC Palm

12/18/15 3:14 PM

TC PALM

Eve Samples: Sheriff Snyder says this is 'not a bloodbath' — but an overhaul

By Eve Samples

Originally published 05/01/2017, January 13, 2018
 Updated this column January 13, 2018

"This has not been a bloodbath," the newly inaugurated Martin County sheriff told me during his fourth day on the job.

Less than a week into his tenure, Sheriff William Snyder already had eliminated the highest ranks within the agency (gone are the titles of colonel and major, except for one who will continue to oversee corrections).

With that, he demoted his former political rival, John "Sk" Pietruszewski, from major to a sergeant on the gun range.

Snyder also reassigned four civilian employees and about 15 law enforcement officers. Among them was legal adviser Terence Nolan, who has been replaced by newly hired Glenn Theobald, who will earn \$108,000 a year.

And he hired outsiders to serve as the faces of his agency in the community, former congressional aide Steve Leighton, who will fill a newly created "business and government affairs director" role, and former TV reporter Christine Christofek, the sheriff's new public information officer.

Both Leighton and Christofek campaigned for Snyder and donated to his campaign.

"I need people next to me that share my vision and my passion for how I think this agency should look," Snyder said. "That is the fundamental core essential ingredient in personnel selection — to have people to my left, to my right, in front of me, behind me that agree with my direction."

No, he conceded. But they might disagree with his methods.

What are his methods?

"I think that's a question that's appropriate to answer in a sound bite," Snyder said. "I think it's one of those things — you know it when you see it."

Snyder has seen more than a hint of it during his first week on the job.

Nathan has been fired since Snyder took office Tuesday. Career service law protects most workers from losing their jobs without cause.

But many have retired or been reassigned to less appealing positions, resulting in an air of uncertainty over the agency that re-elected Sheriff Robert Crowder ran for 20 years.

"I'm not defending what I did," Snyder said. "I did what was right."

He explained that he eliminated the majors — except for the director of corrections, **Mike Casey** — because he wanted to have a closer working relationship with the new sheriff.

"I would not have been able for me to work through two levels of bureaucracy — major and major — to get at a decision," Snyder said, adding that he might bring the positions back later.

The seven sergeants who are now on his command staff got "administrative experience" for getting up their duties. Even so, he estimates his top-level reorganization will save more than half a million dollars a year through the loss of including sergeants' positions in that figure since he is not technically part of the command team.

Snyder's overhaul of the agency has been swift, and it has prompted cries of political favoritism.

I called his predecessor, Crowder, to ask what he thought of the changes at the agency he ran for so long.

Crowder was loathe to criticize Snyder, even though the two have had their political differences. But he cautioned that the changes could damage morale.

He said, "I don't regret it," Crowder said.

But he cautioned that the politics of the office can be a distraction.

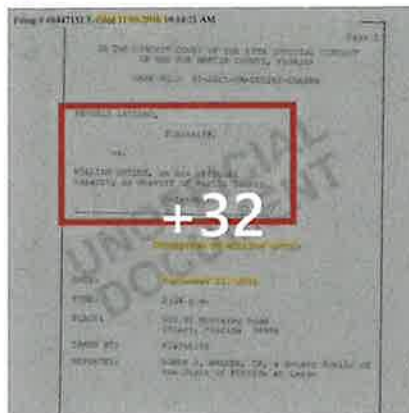
"I really think the office of sheriff should be nonpartisan," he said.

Having worked the parties during five terms, Crowder said he didn't think the internal changes would hurt public safety. But Crowder does think Snyder's shake-up will have one effect.

"It's going to generate opposition for him in the next election, for sure."

Eve Samples is a columnist for Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers. The column reflects her opinion. Contact her at 770-221-4217 or eve.samples@scripps.com

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Martin County Watchdog

September 4, 2022 · 🌐

We The People have uncovered a missing Scripps article that explains the quintessential good ol boy network of Martin County law enforcement and politics for those looking to understand just how it all works.

This article has been erased from Scripps/Gannett archives (no surprise there) but was found within a 111-page transcript of a deposition taken of Sheriff William Snyder after he and MCSO were sued for discrimination and wrongful termination of job position(s).

In fact, one of the first things Sheriff Snyder did during his first week after being elected into office was eliminate the position of victim advocates to make way for a new paid position personal friends and financial supporters such as **Stephen G. Leighton**, whose family gave \$4,000 to Snyder's campaign.

Read below and see screenshots of the exhibits/deposition attached. The corruption and discrimination is clear in his behavior and the manipulation of the justice system to the detriment of the community.



Eve Samples: Sheriff Snyder says this is 'not a bloodbath' -- but an overhaul

January 13, 2013 at 5:00 am.

"This had not been a bloodbath," the newly inaugurated Martin County sheriff told me during his fourth day on the job.

Less than a week into his tenure, Sheriff William Snyder already had eliminated the highest ranks within the agency (gone are the titles of colonel and major, except for one who will continue to oversee corrections).

With that, he demoted his former political rival, John "Ski" Pietruszewski, from major to a sergeant on the gun range.

Snyder also reassigned four civilian employees and about 15 law enforcement officers. Among them was legal adviser Terence Nolan, who has been replaced by newly hired Glenn Theobald, who will earn \$108,000 a year.

And he hired outsiders to serve as the faces of his agency in the community: former congressional aide Steve Leighton, who will fill a newly created "business and government affairs director" role and former TV reporter Christine Christofek, the sheriff's new public information officer.

Both Leighton and Christofek campaigned for Snyder and donated to his campaign.

"I need people next to me that share my vision and my passion for how I think this agency should look," Snyder said.

"That is the fundamental core essential ingredient in personnel selection -- to have people to my left, to my right, in front of me, behind me that agree with my direction."

I asked him what that direction was.

"My goal, my mission for this agency is that it be highly professional... motivated to good law enforcement and public safety," he answered.

Would anyone disagree with that?

No, he conceded. But they might disagree with his methods.

What are his methods?

"I think that's a question that's impossible to answer in a sound bite," Snyder said. "I think it's one of those things -- you know it when you see it."

We have seen more than a taste of it during his first week on the job.

Nobody has been fired since Snyder took office Tuesday. Career service law protects most workers from losing their jobs without cause.

But many have retired or been reassigned to less-appealing positions, creating an air of uncertainty over the agency that now-retired Sheriff Rober Crowder ran for 20 years.

"I'm not defending what I did," Snyder said. "I did what was right."

He explained that he eliminated the majors - except for the director of corrections, Maj. Casey Szparaga - because he wanted to have a closer working relationship with the rank-and-file.

"It would not have been easy for me to work through two levels of supervision - colonel and





The seven captains who are now on his command staff got "administrative stipends" for picking up extra duties.

Even so, he estimates his top-level reorganization will save more than half a million dollars a year (though he is not including Leighton's position in that figure since he is not technically part of the command team).

Snyder's overhaul of the agency has been swift, and it has prompted cries of political favoritism.

I called his predecessor, Crowder, to ask what he thought of the changes at the agency he ran for so long.

Crowder was loath to criticize Snyder, even though the two have had their political differences.

But he cautioned that the changes could damage morale.

"You know, once you win the election, then you have to forget about the past and let these people have an opportunity to reassign their loyalty and get in step with you," Crowder said.

Crowder practiced that philosophy back in 1993 when he hired Snyder after beating him in the previous year's sheriff's race.

"By and large, I didn't regret it," Crowder said.

But he conceded that the politics of the office can be a distraction.

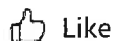
"I really think the office of sheriff should be nonpartisan," he said.

Having walked this gauntlet during five terms, Crowder said he didn't think the internal changes would hurt public safety. But Crowder does think Snyder's shake-up will have one effect:

"It's going to generate opposition for him in the next election, I'm sure."



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EXHIBIT D

COPY

**Martin County Watchdog**

October 1 · 🌐

**DID THE FEDS CATCH A BIG FISH IN MARTIN/ST. LUCIE COUNTY?***

It's been about two and a half months since the IRS raided the office of Tee Off Temps and Elite Payroll Solutions in Stuart on Slater Street. We have not heard anything since WPTV announced the raid, but there are several lawsuits, millions in multiple PPP loans, and many allegations to unpack just based on public records.

According to the lawsuits filed by three clients against Elite Payroll Solutions AKA Aaron Brown and Associates AKA AdvantageHR Services AKA Matthew Brown and Associates, following the raid on July 12th, Elite sent out an email to their clients referencing the raid by stating that the IRS had "visited" them. That's a funny way of telling clients that 20+ undercover cars and armed agents swarmed the office in tactical gear.

The clients that filed suit on the same day (July 18th) about week later following the raid are Lake Oconee Bistro, Inc. in Georgia; Ocean Village Bistro, Inc. of St. Lucie County; and Garden Hospitality Inc. d/b/a 2nd Street Bistro of Fort Pierce*- all were represented by Attorney Jay M. Levy in Miami. To no surprise, the Defendants (Elite) are represented by Gunster Law Firm.

The three Elite clients represented by Levy filed complaints for fraud seeking the imposition of a constructive trust and for breach of fiduciary duty seeking restitution, along with an emergency motion for a temporary injunction without notice.

As one of the complaints stated, "It appears that Elite has engaged in a repeated practice, not just with Ocean but with other clients, of collecting money as a fiduciary and not paying money to the IRS."

What the clients have also alleged in their complaints:

Ocean Village Bistro, Inc. in Port St. Lucie claimed "for each pay period that Elite withdrew funds to pay Ocean's employees and the taxes, Elite would forward a notice to Plaintiff indicating the amount it was removing from Plaintiff's account.

Each quarter, Elite would send Ocean a copy of the Former 941 Employer Quarterly Federal Income Tax Return ('Quarterly Returns') which contained a schedule of payments made to the IRS. According to these schedules, all of the money withheld from Ocean's employees for taxes and withdrawn by Elite from Ocean's accounts were paid to the IRS for each pay period.

In May of 2023, Ocean received a notice from the IRS which indicated that Ocean owed money for taxes withheld from its employees because there was a discrepancy because the amounts actually received by the IRS from Elite were less than the amount of taxes reported by Elite in the Quarterly returns to have been paid to the IRS.

Prior to this notice, Ocean had no notice that anything was amiss with regard to Elite's payment of federal taxes to the IRS.

When Ocean brought this to Elite's attention, Elite advised it was a 'clerical error' committed by a former employee of the company and filed an amended return correcting the error and paying the unpaid money to the IRS. The payment was made by Elite from it's [sic] account at Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.

There remains the issue of the amount of penalties and interest Ocean will owe due to the failure





Concerned about the serious error of Elite in failing to pay the entirety of the money withheld for taxes to the IRS, Ocean hired Allen Bornstein, the president of WorkGroup Payroll, Inc, a payroll service, to review Ocean's payments to the IRS and determine whether all monies withheld for taxes had been paid to the IRS."

"As a result of the review, Bornstein determined that since the inception of the relationship between Ocean and Elite, Elite had engaged in a pattern of conduct by which it failed to make many payments to the IRS which Quarterly Returns indicated had been made to the IRS. This conduct occurred over seven (7) consecutive quarters.

According to the summary prepared by Bornstein and attached to his affidavit as Exhibit 'A', the unpaid payments total \$348,436.86."

See attached complaint(s) and IRS letter that shows the follow discrepancies by:

Total Social Security wages from Forms 941 and Forms W-2 difference: \$261,224

Total Social Security tips from Forms .941 and Forms W-2 difference: \$122,285

Total Medicare wages from Forms 941 and Forms W-2 difference: \$383,509

General Allegations from Lake Oconee against Elite:

"This review established that each Quarterly Return filed by Elite with the IRS and sent to Oconee for the period of time from the second quarter of 2020 through the first quarter of 2023 were false because they reported many payments which had not actually been paid to the IRS. The review revealed a constant and ongoing failure of Elite to make the tax payments which Elite indicated in the Employer's Quarterly Tax Return had been made to the IRS for Oconee in each quarter. These unpaid monies total \$474,026.79."

Garden Hospitality dba 2nd St Bistro of St. Lucie County filed a complaint against Aaron Brown and Associates/Advantage HR (aka Elite) alleging that after hiring a third party to review Garden's payments to Advantage/Elite vs. what was paid to the IRS, they found that "each Quarterly Return filed by Advantage with the IRS and sent to Garden" from the first quarter of 2017 to the first quarter of 2023 with the exception of the 3rd quarter of 2019 and first of 2020, "were false because they reported payments which had not actually been paid to the IRS... These unpaid moneys total \$1,449,098.68."

An earlier lawsuit filed by iVox Solutions LLC in February 2021 against Matthew Brown & Associates, Inc. d/b/a Elite Payroll Solutions contains general allegations that sound very similar:

"It was not until after the termination of the Parties' business relationship that IVOX learned that ELITE had been overcharging IVOX during the course of at least the last FIVE (5) years of their business relationship."

"IVOX also learned that ELITE was not providing the correct income information for at least some of the employees to the Social Security Administration.

Since leaving ELITE, IVOX has been made aware that ELITE was not providing any payroll information or was underreporting information so now that those employees are with IVOX they are asking IVOX to correct the problem.

Since these employees were employees of ELITE only ELITE can correct the problem however IVOX is now in the position of having to deal with the fallout of ELITE'S improper payroll practices. These employees are finding out that their social security money in the future may not reflect their actual income and therefore they will not receive as large a check.





number.

1. ELITE was to pass on the unemployment taxes to IVOX as part of the cost of the employees provided. This number would then be added to the overall amount that ELITE would then base its administrative fee on.
2. After the end of ELITE and IVOX's business relationship ended, IVOX learned that ELITE was routinely overcharging IVOX for the unemployment taxes for the employees provided to IVOX, ELITE as well then based its administrative fee off of this artificially and improperly elevated number.
3. ELITE's action caused IVOX to not only overpay ELITE for the unemployment taxes related to the employees provided to IVOX, but also overpay ELITE by paying the administrative fee calculated off an improperly heightened amount."

COUNT I - UNJUST ENRICHMENT

COUNT II - BREACH OF CONTRACT

COUNT III - FRAUD

A November 18, 2020 letter from Plaintiff's (IVOX) attorney John Madden to Matt Brown at Elite reads:

"Dear Mr. Brown,

I am writing this letter on behalf of my client iVox Solutions LLC as it regards the payroll services provided to my client and more specifically the breach of your agreement with them. My client recently became aware that it was overcharged for State of Florida unemployment taxes by your company in the amount of \$429,738.96 between the years 2016 and 2020."

"My client has also recently been made aware that your company was not properly reporting income to the social security administration and therefore employees are receiving notices now that say that there were years they did not work and contribute into the system even though they were working for your company.

My client would prefer to amicably resolve these matters and therefore we look forward to your prompt response to this letter. If we are unable to amicably resolve this matter within fifteen (15) days from the date of this letter my client has directed that I take any and all actions necessary in order to recoup the funds for them and to correct the reporting issues described above.

Please govern yourself accordingly,"

As of the 12th of this month (September), all four of these lawsuits have been settled. That was quick.

And for those who don't like math, Elite/Matthew Brown & Associates/Aaron Brown & Associates/Advantage HR have so far been accused by their clients of defrauding them of over \$2.7 million in payments that should have gone to the IRS.

A Google review left for Elite Payroll/Advantage HR also highlights discrepancies with the employees' tax returns:

Jimmy DeNardo- 4 years ago- "Very shady. They didnt report my wages to the IRS and now its November and I still dont have my tax return. I wouldnt recommend Elite Payroll Solutions. Use them at your own risk!"

For those of you unfamiliar with all these business names, the main parties listed on these businesses are of the Brown family- Matthew and Kristin (a married couple), Barrie Brown, and C. Michael Brown





Cheryl Ann Logan is the face of Elite Payroll/Advantage HR on Facebook and on LinkedIn, she is listed as an Executive Business Consultant at Elite Payroll Solutions, but in Facebook comments on a post simply sharing an article about the raid, she claims it was "For something totally unrelated to elite as a company. Get your facts straight." She also went on to comment that the news story was "gossip" and "fake news."

Cheryl Ann Logan is "friends" with Barrie Brown and Kristin Brown on Facebook and she seems to take after similar interests as Kristin with expensive clothing, jewelry, bags, and cars. See attached photos.

The Elite Team also includes Cheyenne Ellison who runs Propane Services Inc. d/b/a Elite Gas. See attached photo posted by Ellison captioned, "Sister company is kicking but [sic] with Elite Gas" referring to the Brown's A/C Care company- one of their many local business ventures.

Matthew Brown is listed on the following LLC's with Cheyenne Ellison:

1. EGT Holdings, EGT Holdings I-IV
2. Propane Services Inc DBA Elite Gas since 2012 according to Sunbiz.

Stephen AKA Stephan AKA Steve Leighton's comment on Cheyenne Ellison's post 6 years ago showing off the Browns' private jet and fleet of vehicles did not age well. Leighton commented, "It's time for a company plane. After all it's just money."

What an odd thing for the Chief of Staff for U.S. Congressman Brian Mast to say.

Fun fact: The Browns were the former owners of Ellison's home before he purchased it in 2016 and prior to that, it belonged to FF Development which is a joint venture LLC between Paul Filipe (Mike Mortell's business partner) and Nelson Ferreira (Stacey Hetherington's boss). That's another rabbit hole to follow some other time.

Ferreira and Filipe (FF Development) purchased the home from the Sheltras in 2005 and did a lot of work on the place from 2013 to 2015 when the Browns purchased it.

Interestingly, Ellison was the contractor in 2013 who laid his own gas lines long before he purchased the home in March of 2016. In July of 2016, Ellison contracted his "sister company" owned by Brown, A/C Care LLC.

Another fun fact: In 2014 Rick Mancil was contracted to do the asphalt driveway. According to the MC appraiser's site, Mancil also owns the property that Ellison and Brown operate their Elite Gas out of at 2130 SW Poma Dr at the Palm City Contractors Centre. Over \$12 million in PPP loans have gone to businesses located at the Palm City Contractors Centre.

A recent confrontation between Cheyenne Ellison and Martin County Sheriff deputies gives us a glance at some of the personalities we are dealing with (as does a search of Ellison and Mancil's legal history).

In September of 2022, while being cited for insufficient life preservers (a minor citation) on board his boat The Darkside, Ellison escalated the situation by verbally assaulting/threatening the deputies and ended up receiving a BUI (a felony) for running his mouth. He in fact said the quiet parts out loud.

Here are some direct quotes from his arrest affidavit:

"The captain stated that he knows 'Snyder' and was yelling at us, asking if we knew who we were dealing with. I informed him I needed to see a life preserver for each person on board, which there were 16. Only 12 life preservers were produced to me."

The male again became belligerent, cursing very aggressively, saying he was going to run my



began grabbing the equipment. I stated I need the captain of the vessel to grab the equipment, which the captain again began saying he's 'Not grabbing shit', and instead began recording me.

I asked the captain to show me the proper fire extinguishers, which when he began moving about the vessel, he stumbled and had to grab a railing for support. No other passengers were stumbling on the beached vessel as they moved around. I asked for his identification and registration for the vessel which he refused to produce.

I asked for him to step forward to give me his name and date of birth, which he again stumbled to me. Another passenger walked over to me and handed me the captain's Identification, identifying him as Cheyenne Ellison, without reaching for support and walking steadily.

I informed Ellison he would be receiving a citation for insufficient life preservers, to which he became even more belligerent. He began shouting 'We are unloyal', 'We should know better' referring to the deputies on board my vessel. He also stated 'I donate every year to the Sheriff's Office', and he is going to be calling Snyder and Dougherty.

He told me directly, 'I'm going to rape your punk ass' as other passengers held him back, attempting to calm him down. The other passengers on the vessel were very cooperative with my efforts to speak to Ellison and repeatedly tried to calm him down with no success [sic]."

Two months later, while his felony case was still open, Martin County Sheriff's Office posted photos with Ellison and his other business partner at Stuart Sod, Billy Stiger, for their involvement with a local charity. A bit inappropriate, isn't it? It would be one thing to accept favors and charity privately, but it's another to post PR to Facebook with someone who has an active open felony case involving threats made to MCSO deputies.

Here is what else can be found based on public records:

Businesses located at 3180 SE SLATER ST. where the IRS raid took place (according to Sunbiz):

Elite Plumbing Solutions, LLC
 Aaron Brown & Associates, Inc.
 C. Michael Brown, Inc.
 Matthew Brown & Associates, Incorporated
 Payroll Synergy, Inc.
 Superior Labor Services I, LLC
 Tee Off Labor, LLC
 Tee Off Recruitment, LLC
 Tee Off Staffing, LLC
 Tee-Off-Temps, Inc.

Tee Off Temps, Inc. took the largest "landscaping services" PPP loan in the country even though they are a staffing company for landscaping and golf companies.

They took \$9.35M for 500 jobs. But that wasn't enough for the Browns.

Matthew Brown & Associates, Inc also took \$191,500 for 19 jobs.

The Browns also own Extreme Performance next door at 3170 SE Slater- Extreme Performance Truck & Trailer, Inc. took \$252,400 for 21 jobs.

Physicians Advantage Services, Inc. took \$93,700 for 9 jobs. 3 of those jobs belonged to Matthe Brown, his [presumed] brother Christopher, and their father Barrie Brown who are all listed on the





That adds up to more than \$9.6 Million in Small Business Administration payment protection funds for the Brown family and their related businesses.

They also claim on their website that "Tee Off Temps is the leading business partner for delivering staffing services for Golf Courses nationwide."

Job listings for Tee Off do not match PPP loan data that "based on their reported 500 jobs retained, this equals an estimated average yearly compensation of \$89,732 per employee" according to what was reported by Federal Pay. "TEE Off Temps, Inc's 2019 payroll expenses are estimated to be at least \$44.87M."

There is a remarkable difference in what their listings offer for pay. See attached job offerings that range from \$12-26 hourly in Texas, South Carolina, and Florida.

Glassdoor- Tee-Off-Temps, Inc. listing for Landscape Crew \$12-\$15 Stuart, FL.

A Prosper, TX listed states- "Looking for experienced drivers/crew leaders for fast paced landscaping company...Starting pay 20.00-23.00 per hour."

Other jobs range from \$28k- \$51k. Nothing close to having an average of \$89k salary is listed anywhere.

So, how do the Browns like to spend their *alleged* unjust enrichment?
Very publicly.

An October 2022 article by The Real Deal highlights the Browns' sale of their home in the Old Palm Golf Club community:

"Records show Jason and Marissa Elmer bought the home at 11757 Elina Court from Matthew and Kristin Brown. "

"The Browns bought the house via an LLC in 2019 for \$3.8 million, records show. Built in 2017, the four-bedroom, five-bathroom home spans nearly 7,000 square feet."

"The real selling point of the home, though, was the closets, according to" the Browns' real estate agent, Jeremy Browne of Compass.

"The buyer will tell you that house sold because his wife liked the closets," he said. Browne's client had converted one of the home's bedrooms into a large walk-in closet, intended for displaying collections of designer bags and shoes."

See photos attached of the closet with a "NEED MONEY FOR BIRKIN" neon sign in a room full of designer labels on display from Chanel to Louis Vuitton, Christian Louboutin, Hermes, etc.

The Browns also had multiple displays of their Ferraris, like the blown-up pair of photographs next to a giant safe located in their home gym (see attached).

They had more photos of a yellow Ferrari and what looks like three private jet models on display in their home office.

According to The Real Deal, "The recorded sale price was \$9.2 million, but Browne said the actual price was \$10.2 million, which included furnishings. The home, on 0.5 acres in the Old Palm Golf Club private community, marks a record for the gated neighborhood's smaller lots, Browne said."

The Browns are known for their lavish lifestyle and love of expensive sports cars.

Braman Magazine published a spread on Kristin Brown, and it was posted in December 2017 by Rolls-Royce Motor Cars of Palm Beach with a photo of Kristen wrapping up shopping at Hermes Palm Beach with her awaiting Roll-Royce Ghost ready to hit the road (see attached). Kristin also





The Braman article on Kristin stated, "She and her husband Matt have...become active supporters of ZWF by adopting 2 lions who she both lovingly named Max and Kya. She has closely interacted with them since they were tiny cubs. Kristin even had a lion cub, as well as a monkey, at her wedding at The Eau Palm Beach, which certainly raised an eyebrow or two."

"Kristin's capacity to love doesn't just end with her animals; it extends children as well. She and her husband are very philanthropic and enjoy supporting charities that involve children. "Our main charity that we support is called Operation 300, which is a local charity that focuses on programs and support for the children who lost their father as a result of military service..."

Here is the part of the Braman article on Kristin Brown that may elicit some eye rolling:

"With a demanding career, prized pets to care for, and philanthropic endeavors, you'd think Kristin had nothing left to give. But for a woman with a heart as big as hers, and a capacity for love so vast, there's room for more passion. Enter her love of fast cars, Porsches in particular."

Kristin was quoted: "Because of my love for cars, I have amassed a bit of a collection. I have a Common theme with all my cars as they are all white with black wheels."

Braman went on to say, "Just like you can't choose a favorite baby, Kristin is reluctant to name a favorite vehicle, especially since each one has its own unique function [sic] 'I drive different cars for different purposes whether it is work, play or track.'"

"She has a Panamera GTS, a Rolls-Royce Ghost that she uses as work and daily drivers since they are 4 doors, a 911 Targa 4 GTS as a fun weekend cars [sic], and a Porsche GT3 RS, BMW M2 and BMW M4 GTS for the track." See attached photos of her and her fleet.

"She's not shy about her need for speed. 'I love the adrenaline rush and competitiveness of racing...'"

"In November, Kristen will go to Palm Springs to complete the last 2 courses of the Challenge racing series, which will enable her to race in the 2018 race season.

Fun fact: she and her husband will feed their competitive spirits by racing against one another on different teams next year."

Fun fact: Several years later, she and her husband are likely facing federal felony charges ranging from tax evasion to fraud.

See attached October 23, 2017 Facebook caption by Kristin Dee Brown that reads:

"My new Race Baby is in!!! Fresh off the transporter today!! Beyond excited!!! #488challengecar #ferrarichallenge #teamsanfrancisco #ferrarichallenge2018 #letsdothis @ Ferrari of San Francisco"

In a later post we will explore what customers and clients have claimed as well as the connections and contributions to local politicians such as State Attorney Tom Bakkedahl, Martin County Sheriff William Snyder, Stuart City Manager Mike Mortell, and Commissioner Stacey Hetherington.

*Locations were updated to be more specific.



**TEE Off Temps, Inc**

Entity: Corporation

Industry: Landscaping Services

Location: Palm City, FL

[View Profile](#) [View All PPP Data](#)

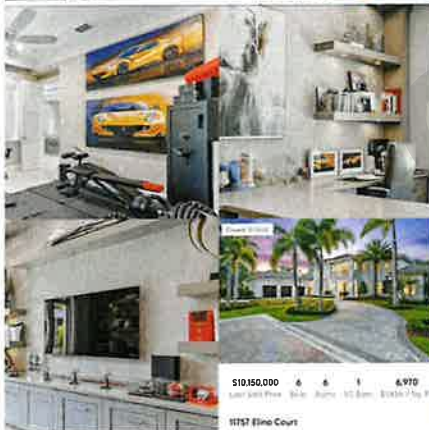
TEE Off Temps, Inc is a corporation located at 4425 Sw Martin Hwy in Palm City, Florida that received a Coronavirus-related PPP loan from the SBA of \$9,347,100.00 in April, 2020.

The company has reported itself as a male owned business, and employed at least 500 people during the applicable loan period.

PPP Loan Information

Loan #202007405

Loan Size:	Jobs Retained:	Loan Approved:	Loan Status:	Lender:
\$9.35M	500	2020-04-29	Paid In Full or Forgiven	Loan Source Incorporated



Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Palm Beach
Club Braham Member Kristin Brown has a love for animals, philanthropy and luxury vehicles. Learn more about her in the latest edition of Club Braham Magazine!

Timeline photos · Dec 11, 2017



36

41 comments 28 shares



Like



Comment



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All comments ▼



Write a comment...



Author

Martin County Watchdoghttps://m.youtube.com/watch?v=IkBzL_peOHc

YOUTUBE.COM

Stuart business searched by IRS agents

6w Like Reply





Author

Martin County Watchdog<https://therealdeal.com/.../cybersecurity-founder-nabs.../>

THEREALDEAL.COM

Cybersecurity Founder Buys Palm Beach Gardens House for \$9M

6w Like Reply



Author

Martin County Watchdog<https://www.wptv.com/.../stuart-business-searched-by-irs...>

WPTV.COM

Stuart business searched by IRS agents

6w Like Reply

**Jordan Prince**

Que the " he's a up standing citizen who donates alot of money" in 3..2..1..

Hes been playing that game for a while, my old employer was audited 7-8yrs ago for elite payroll shorting the irs payroll tax. They did take care of it tho

6w Like Reply

**Susanna Broxmeyer**

Thank you so much for taking the time to collect all this information and putting it out there. Oh how the world turns in a small town...

5w Like Reply



Author

Martin County Watchdog

Susanna Broxmeyer Appreciate you taking the time to read it! [OBJ] It's unfortunate that **Stephen Leighton's** feathers are so ruffled he's trying to sue me for "defamation" when it's undeniable how hard I've worked to put this information together and connect the dots.

5w Like Reply

**John Smith**

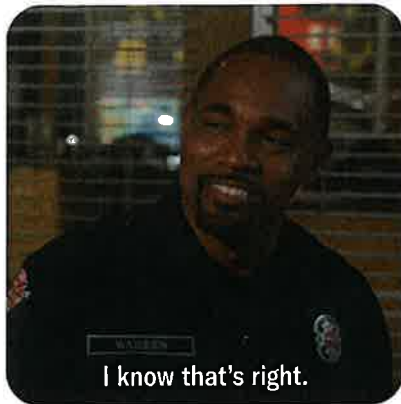
Greed will bring everyone down

6w Like Reply



Author

Martin County Watchdog**John Smith**



6w Like Reply

**Rose Corleone**

The amount of nationwide corruption is HUGE! These "LLC's" are all corrupt. Hope this goes somewhere!

6w Like Reply

**Kari Baker**

Just here for the comments 🙌🏻

6w Like Reply

**Shannon Kerner**

Can't wait for the later post!!!

6w Like Reply

**Jamie Walsh**

One of the PPP loop holes to getting your loan forgiven but not having to hire staff is if "you can't find anyone qualified for the position"

Elite payroll consistently has job postings on indeed, but never fills them. ... **See more**

6w Like Reply

**Jamie Walsh**

Interestingly enough now they're all removed, and I'm sure that has to do with their current legal situation

6w Like Reply



Author

Martin County Watchdog

Jamie Walsh Very interesting. Their most recent FB post is from September 18th on the **Tee Off Temps** page.

6w Like Reply

**Jamie Walsh**

Martin County Watchdog yeah well I'd take down all my proof of fraudulent activity if I was being investigated as well

6w Like Reply





3



1



Author

Martin County Watchdog**Jamie Walsh** And that's why I've screen shot all of it.

It also makes sense that they would settle the suits quickly after the raid in anticipation of having to pay defense attorney fees. It's going to be very expensive going up against the feds who ha... [See more](#)

6w Like Reply



2

**Jamie Walsh****Martin County Watchdog** can't pull a "I know Snyder!" on them Imfao

6w Like Reply

**Jamie Walsh****Martin County Watchdog** can't pull a "I know Snyder!" on them Imfao

6w Like Reply



2

**Michael Vito**

Martin County Watchdog so you mental midgets know who they are hiring on a daily basis? Brilliant Imao. Y'all don't know shit. @martin county watch dog has made multiple false statements about the raid and the PPP loans. Slander is real, and you will a... [See more](#)

6w Like Reply



Author

Martin County Watchdog

Michael Vito Not sure how Biden or Fauci are relevant to the conversation but please do tell what statements are false. I am always happy to correct anything when presented with a clear set of facts that prove otherwise. Mostly everything posted here i... [See more](#)

6w Like Reply



5

**Jamie Walsh**

Michael Vito what are you upset because you also use PPP loopholes? It's pretty easy to deduce that when someone constantly has job ads posted that they're supposed to be hiring 🤔 weird that the same ones are there for months on end.

6w Like Reply



2

**Jamie Walsh**

Michael Vito btw your aggression here is fitting the narrative quite well and if you were gonna "sue for slander" I'm sure your attorneys would inform you not to comment on these posts on a public forum.

6w Like Reply



5

**Michael Vito**

Jamie Walsh looks like you have a nice family there. Think you should be attacking or slandering people? I wonder if your family is proud of you? I guess you 2 guys are just jealous people. Can't stand someone else's success





6w Like Reply

**Michael Vito****Martin County Watchdog** yeah I highly doubt you'd correct anything if I gave you the proper information.

6w Like Reply

**Michael Vito****Martin County Watchdog** what's interesting or suspicious about that?

6w Like Reply

**Michael Vito****Jamie Walsh** you got a lot to lose to be talking about people in a public forum.

6w Like Reply

**Jamie Walsh****Michael Vito** I'm not jealous nor do I care about other people's success or failure for that matter. Bringing up my family though is really showing your true character and not helping your cause.Anyway, I never said directly that Elite was doing the... [See more](#)

6w Like Reply

 **Author****Martin County Watchdog****Michael Vito** I've corrected information several times. Nobody is perfect but I would never post anything that's untrue deliberately nor would I keep it up if I saw proof otherwise. But go ahead and keep crying victim while acting like a bully. Really he... [See more](#)

6w Like Reply

**Michael Vito**

You might be the biggest idiot of them all.

6w Like Reply

**Jamie Walsh****Michael Vito** probably 🤔 close second to you

6w Like Reply

**Michael Vito****Jamie Walsh** you don't have a clue what you're talking about.

6w Like Reply

**Jamie Walsh****Michael Vito** do they pay you a bonus to go this hard for them?

6w Like Reply

**Lisa Kniceley**

Thieves and proud of it. What a shame .

6w Like Reply





Linnette LaHaye Yakinchuk
Lisa Kniceley amen!

6w Like Reply



Charlene Herzog-Coles
Belinda Lowe

6w Like Reply



Rob Newton
John Chiorando 🙌👍 2

6w Like Reply



Jimmy Wilson
Josh did u get what sent 2 you

6w Like Reply



Traci Shanks
Cheyenne Ellison

6w Like Reply



Jimmy Wilson
@

6w Like Reply



Valerie Bodine
GREED is of the devil

6w Like Reply 🙌 2

COPY



EXHIBIT E

COPY

2:10

5G 99%



sheriffs office address? Some examples and questions.

- Why did a detective have a private cleaning business registered to the MCSO address? And why was a fictitious name available until only 2016 while the business didn't close until 2018?
- Why was Treasure Coast Equine Sports ever registered there?
- Why use and what are the ramifications of using the MCSO address for an event tent company?
- Why did a private family business - Leighton Farms - have any correspondence going to the sheriff's office as recently as 2022?
- Why does The Stephen G. Leighton Group - not registered with the state of Florida as a business nor as a DBA - have a current tax bill citing the MCSO office as the address on file?
- And why does anyone think it's smart to use the MCSO address as an address of record for campaign contributions, like the pic attached showing donations to Sheriff Snyder in 2016? FYI if they qualify, a person can apply for a protected address and it's not public record. It's actually redacted and noted as such. So why use the MCSO address?

So who is screening mail at the sheriff's office - including solicitations for campaign contributions because someone used the MCSO address as an address of record and not their home address as



Comment as Stephen...



2:10

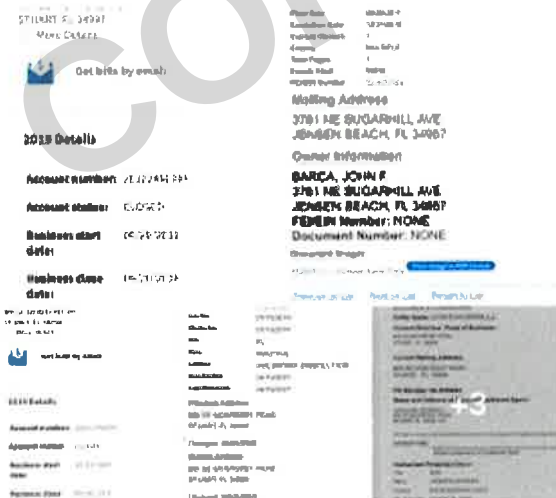
56% 99+



address of record and not their home address as they should have if it were a personal campaign contribution - to make sure the mail gets to where it needs to go for any personal businesses?

Same goes for the City example.

If anyone can shine some light on some VALID reasons the MCSO was / is used, please comment below or DM me. I'm always open to learning something new.



Most relevant ▾



2:10

5G 99+

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2022 FLORIDA LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY ANNUAL REPORT
DOCUMENT# L21000079665

Entity Name: LEIGHTON FARMS LLC

Current Principal Place of Business:
800 SE MONTEREY ROAD
STUART, FL 34994

Current Mailing Address:

800 SE MONTEREY ROAD
STUART, FL 34994

FEI Number: 88-2096053

Name and Address of Current Registered Agent:

LEIGHTON, STEPHEN
800 SE MONTEREY ROAD
STUART, FL 34994 US

The above named entity submits this statement for the purpose of changing its registered office

SIGNATURE:

Electronic Signature of Registered Agent

Authorized Person(s) Detail :

Title	MGR
Name	LEIGHTON, STEPHEN
Address	800 SE MONTEREY ROAD
City/State/Zip	STUART FL 34994



1



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12:42



Business Tax Account



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2:10

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Events **No Name History**
Detail by Officer/Registered Agent Name
Florida Profit Corporation
UNITED TENT RENTALS, INC.
Filing Information
Document Number P14000059718
PB/BOT Number 47-2520342
Date Filed 07/15/2014
Effective Date 07/15/2014
State FL
Status INACTIVE
Last Event VOLUNTARY DISSOLUTION
Event Date Filed 04/19/2021
Event Effective Date 04/19/2021
Principal Address
800 SE MONTEREY ROAD
STUART, FL 34996
Changed: 09/25/2020
Mailing Address
800 SE MONTEREY ROAD
STUART, FL 34996
Changed: 09/25/2020
Registered Agent Name & Address
LEIGHTON, STEPHEN G
800 SE MONTEREY ROAD
STUART, FL 34996

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2:10

5G% 99.4

< SAVE - Martin County, Florida's post



1



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#19	Dennis B. Dufalla	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	1100 SE Monrovia				\$150.00
	Plant Street FL				
#20	Larson	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	245 NW Flagler Ave.				\$50.00
	Stuart FL 34906				
#21	Stephen T. Crisp	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	1805 NW Ringne				\$500.00
	Worland Road FL				
#22	Dennis M. Dufalla	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	1100 SE Monrovia				\$150.00
	Plant Street FL				
#23	Orlando B. Dufalla	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	1100 SE Monrovia				\$150.00
	Plant Street FL				
#24	Harold A. Dufalla	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	1100 SE Monrovia				\$50.00
	Plant Street FL				
#25	William R. Dufalla	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	1100 SE Monrovia				\$500.00
	Plant Street FL				
#26	Kelli Dufalla	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	1100 SE Monrovia				\$150.00
	Plant Street FL				
#27	S.A. Dufalla	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	1100 SE Monrovia				\$150.00
	Plant Street FL				
#28	Stephen R. Dufalla	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	1100 SE Monrovia				\$500.00
	Plant Street FL				
#29	Harold A. Dufalla	Individual	Unknown	Check	
4/28/2016	1100 SE Monrovia				\$500.00
	Plant Street FL				



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