



Follow the Money...by Bill Irwin

Originally posted on Facebook, via Piscataway People, and adapted for publication here.

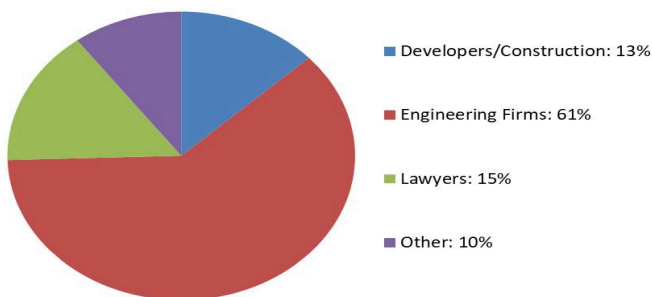
PART 1: The first set of campaign finance reports for the 2024 Democratic Primary election in Piscataway for the Wahler, Cahill, Rouse and Shah campaign, running under the Middlesex County Democratic Organization slogan, has come out, and they make for interesting reading. As usual, they are financed by business interests (law firms, engineering firms, developers, etc.) who profit from doing business with or within Piscataway. I'll have more to say in detail about these reports, but I want to start with this.

Out of \$70,500 raised by Wahler & Co., a total of ONE contribution, totaling \$1,000, came from a person or entity with a Piscataway address. Why is that? Why, for example, is Zach Adams of Waggoner Engineering in Jackson, Mississippi so interested in Piscataway politics that he donated \$10,000?

The question answers itself. Your local politicians have been bought and paid for by interests outside of Piscataway for years. Every bad decision made by them flows from that fact.



Follow the Money, Part 2 - Where Wahler's Money Comes From



PART 2: Where Wahler's Money Comes From

So in Follow the Money, Part 1, I noted that of the \$70,500 in contributions received by the Wahler campaign thus far, only \$1,000 of those contributions had come from donors with a Piscataway address. I also made the claim that Wahler's campaign was being financed by individuals/entities with business interests in Piscataway.

As I am not one to make claims without data to back them up, I thought I would provide a breakdown of where the money comes from, by industry. In the chart below, you will see that the vast majority comes from Engineering Firms, Developers, and Lawyers. Now, why, you might ask, would such a preponderance of donations come from those three places? Good question. More to follow...



Follow the Money, Part 3: Engineering Support

So in Part 1 of this series we noted that only \$1,000 out of the \$70,500 raised by Mayor Wahler and his running mates thus far came from someone in Piscataway, and wondered why so much out of town money was funding their campaign. In Part 2, we noted that almost all of the money came either directly from engineering firms, lawyers, and developers, or individuals employed by them, and wondered whether the firms that were donating had business interests in the township. In today's edition, we'll take a closer look at the engineering firms in particular.

What follows is a list of engineering firms that have either donated directly, or where folks who work for them donated, to the various campaign committees of the Wahler team. For each, the aggregate donation amount thus far is listed, followed by a sampling of various contracts or appointments these firms received pulled from various Township Council minutes. Note: this is a small sampling, as what I have listed is already going to make this a ridiculously long post. There are plenty more, but I think this is enough to get the idea across.

The donations and the contracts/appointments are both facts. What you make of these facts is up to you.

Engineering Firms

Grotto Engineering – 3 individuals form Grotto, totaling \$3,500

From the October 12, 2021 Council Minutes

RESOLUTION #21-338

x. RESOLUTION – Authorizing Contract Amendment No. 1 – Ethel Road Improvements – Grotto Engineering Associates, LLC – Not to Exceed \$16,600.00

y. RESOLUTION – Authorizing Contract Amendment No. 3 – Justice Street Improvements – Grotto Engineering Associates, LLC – Not to Exceed \$15,450.00

RESOLUTION 21-362

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Piscataway, that the appropriate municipal officials be and are hereby authorized to amend the total contract amount with Grotto Engineering Associates, LLC from \$134,864.00 to \$151,464.00 an increase of not to exceed \$16,600.00, due to unanticipated work required for the Ethel Road Improvements, subject to all bid specifications and contract documents.

RESOLUTION 21-363

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Piscataway, that the appropriate municipal officials be and are hereby authorized to amend the total contract amount with Grotto Engineering from \$106,050.00 to \$121,500.00, an increase of not to exceed \$15,450.00, due to unanticipated work required in regard to the Justice Street Improvements from International Ave to Ethel Road, subject to all bid specifications and contract documents.

From the December 23, 2023 Council Minutes

e. RESOLUTION – Authorizing Professional Services Contract – Orris Avenue Roadway Improvements from Metlars Lane to Terminus – Grotto Engineering, LLC – Not to Exceed \$148,050.00.

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Engineering Services Special Projects, Environmental, Etc., Grotto Engineering Associates LLC

Menlo Engineering Associates – 1 contribution totaling \$3,000

From the December 23, 2023 Council Minutes

f. RESOLUTION – Authorizing Professional Services Contract – Blackford Avenue Road Improvements from Lodge Street to Grandview Avenue – Menlo Engineering Associates – Not to Exceed \$173,000.00.

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Engineering Services, Engineering Services, Menlo Engineering Associates

Alaimo Group - 4 individuals form Alaimo, totaling \$3,000

From the December 23, 2023 Council Minutes

g. RESOLUTION – Authorizing Professional Services Contract – Patton Avenue Improvements Phase II from Elwood Street to Hancock Road – Alaimo Group – Not to Exceed \$132,960.00

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Architectural Services, Special Projects, Alaimo Group

Engineering Services Special Projects, Environmental, Etc, Alaimo Group

John Chadwick - 1 contribution totaling \$2,600

From the MINUTES OF THE REGULAR ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT MEETING OF PISCATAWAY TOWNSHIP HELD ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021.

Resolution authorizing John Chadwick, PP as the Professional Planner for the Zoning Board for 2021.

From the September 18, 2018 Council Minutes

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Piscataway that the appropriate municipal officials be and are hereby authorized to enter into a contract with John T. Chadwick IV, P.P., Kendall Park, NJ, to provide Professional Planning Services for the updating of the Township Reexamination Report, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89, as specified above, at the rates set forth in the Proposal, with such services not to exceed \$10,000.00 in cost.

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

COAH, COAH Professional Planning Services, John T. Chadwick

Planning Services, Master Plan Reexamination Planner, John T. Chadwick IV

Planning Services, Township Planner – Redevelopment, John T. Chadwick IV

Najarian Associates - 1 contribution totaling \$2,400

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Construction Management Services Construction Management Services Najarian Associates

Engineering Services Land Surveyor Najarian Associates

Engineering Services Special Projects, Environmental, Etc Najarian Associates

RESOLUTION #23-43

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Piscataway, that the appropriate municipal officials be and are hereby authorized to amend the total contract amount with Najarian Associates, Eatontown, NJ, from \$79,500.00 to a final total not to exceed \$84,500.00, an increase of not to exceed \$5,000.00, due to additional work for the Leslie Avenue Roadway Improvements Phase II Project, subject to all bid specifications and contract documents.

T&M Associates – 4 contributions totaling \$10,400

From the October 6, 2022 Council Minutes

RESOLUTION #22-304

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Piscataway, that the appropriate municipal officials be and are hereby authorized to amend the total contract amount with T&M Associates, from \$517,414.00 to \$522,514.00, an increase of not to exceed \$5,100.00, due to unanticipated work required for the Centennial Avenue Road Improvements from River Road to Knightsbridge Road, subject to all bid specifications and contract documents.

RESOLUTION #22-319

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Piscataway, that the appropriate municipal officials be and are hereby authorized to amend the total contract amount with T&M Associates from \$250,400.00 to \$268,750.00, an increase of not to exceed \$18,350.00, due to unanticipated work required for the Levgar Street Road Improvement Project, subject to all bid specifications and contract documents.

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Construction Management, Services Construction Management Services, T & M Associates

Engineering Services, Engineering Services, T & M Associates

Engineering Services, Township Engineer, T & M Associates

Planning Services, Board of Adjustment Planner, T & M Associates

Planning Services, Planning Board Planner, T & M Associates
Planning Services, Special / Conflict Planner, T & M Associates
Planning Services, Township Planner, T & M Associates

Remington & Vernick - 1 contribution totaling \$2,000

From the December 14, 2021 Council Minutes

RESOLUTION 21-418

t. RESOLUTION – Authorizing Award of Professional Engineering Services Contract – Normandy Drive Improvements – Remington & Vernick Engineers – Not to Exceed \$294,000.00.

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Engineering Services, Engineering Services, Remington & Vernick

Naik Consulting Group – 3 contributions totaling \$3,000

From the July 18, 2023 Council Minutes

RESOLUTION #23-266

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Piscataway that the Township Council does hereby authorize Naik Consulting Group, P.C., to provide Professional Services for the Hancock Road Culvert Project at the rates set forth in said Proposal, with such services not to exceed \$390,000.00 in cost.

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Engineering Services, Land Surveyor, Naik Group

Engineering Services, Special Projects, Environmental, Etc, Naik Consulting Group

Engineering Services, Township Engineer, Naik Group

Engineering Services, Traffic/Engineering, Naik Consulting Group

Delaware Raritan Engineering - 4 contributions totaling \$6,000

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Engineering Services, Township Engineer, Delaware Raritan Engineering, Inc.

Waggoner Engineering – 4 individual contributions, totaling \$10,000

Four contributions of \$2,500 were made by an individual employed by Waggoner Engineering from Jackson, Mississippi. As of yet I have not been able to tie these conclusively to past or pending business with the Township, although I will be very surprised if I can't eventually. But for now I will make no specific claims.



UPDATE! Follow the Money – Part 3 Solving Waggoner

PART 3 (updated): Solving Waggoner

In the original Part 3 post, I wrote, “Four contributions of \$2,500 were made by an individual employed by Waggoner Engineering from Jackson, Mississippi. As of yet I have not been able to tie these conclusively to past or pending business with the Township, although I will be very surprised if I can't eventually. But for now I will make no specific claims.”

I have to admit, the Waggoner thing was really vexing me. What in the world could a firm in Mississippi, that I had never heard of and could find no tie in to Piscataway on the internet, possibly want with getting involved in an election here?

Well, I can't take credit for it, but thanks to some very intrepid investigating by a brilliant friend, it appears we have an answer. Ladies and gentlemen, I bring back to you our old friend ... CME Associates.

Readers of some of my past posts may recall my previously calling out the donations of CME Associates. In fact, I was shocked to find that they were not on the donor rolls this time. In a brilliant 2012 article by Matt Friedman investigating pay to play abuses in New Jersey (I will link the article below), CME was called out as one of the worst offenders in an article detailing how companies were using PACs to skirt New Jersey's pay to play laws (also mentioned in the

article were T&M Associates and Naik Consulting Group, names which should be familiar to anyone who managed to wade through my last post). Also highlighted in the article was ... Sen. Bob Smith.

From the article: "At least some of the political action committees that are concentrated in Middlesex County are coordinated by the county Democratic Party under Smith, said Peter Barnes Jr., the Middlesex County Democratic Party chairman who is a retired FBI agent and a former assemblyman.



"I am aware of the PACs in general, but I'm not aware of them in particular," Barnes said. "We have set up a committee, a fundraising committee that would handle all the PACs and they're run by Senator Bob Smith."

Smith did not respond to several phone calls and an e-mail message seeking comment."

So, how does Waggoner tie into CME? Well, it turns out that in November of 2022, CME announced a new strategic partnership with something called the Trilon Group (I will post the press release below). As far as I can tell, Trilon is a mega roll-up of engineering companies backed by private equity, which is scooping up smaller regional players and combining them into one behemoth. From the press release: "Trilon is backed by Alpine Investors, a people-driven private equity firm committed to building enduring businesses. Trilon's vision is to build the next Top 20 design firm in North America by bringing together some of the nation's best infrastructure consulting firms, like CME."

Ok, you may ask, where does Waggoner come in? Also from the press release: "CME is Trilon's eighth investment, with previous investments including MSG, RKA, Waggoner Engineering, DRMP, ESI Consultants, and Alta."

So, as usual, I invite you to draw your own conclusions from the facts presented. The conclusion that I draw is that CME got acquired by Trilon and let them know about the pay to play gravy train in New Jersey, and how one needs to make campaign contributions to get the contracts. They also let them know that there was a bit of heat on the CME name in New Jersey, so maybe the contributions should come from another entity, one that no one had ever heard of, and certainly wouldn't bother to track down. Or would they...



**Follow the Money – Part 4
The Curious Case of Fresh
Air Rentals LLC**

PART 4: The Curious Case of Fresh Air Rentals LLC

I was going to write a post today detailing how the lawyers who contributed to Mayor Wahler and his running mates benefitted from contracts with the Township, in much the same way as I outlined how the engineering firms do in Part 3 of this series. But I got sidetracked. I got sidetracked by what I came to call “The Curious Case of Fresh Air Rentals”.

As I initially researched the campaign contribution list, many of the connections were obvious to me. I would see “Delaware-Raritan Engineering” and would immediately think, “Oh, they’re the Township Engineer. That makes sense. Or “T&M Associates”, and think, “Yeah, I’ve seen that name before on the Bob Smith contributor list. They get all sorts of lucrative contracts around here.” Again, obvious.

But there was a name on the list that was eating at me, because I couldn’t quite figure it – Fresh Air Rentals LLC. I had never heard of them before. And when I googled “Fresh Air Rentals LLC” what came up was a bunch of images of places that rented bouncy houses and the like (although in fairness, if one refines the search term to “Fresh Air Rentals LLC Piscataway” the top result is 37 Old New Brunswick Rd, Piscataway. If I had done that to begin with I might have saved myself a lot of trouble...).

So my first thought (and I don’t think this is unreasonable as it sounds) was “Did these folks really hit up a bouncy house provider for the Street Fair or something like that for campaign money?” (I was stuck on the bouncy house thing). So I kept digging.

The address of Fresh Air Rentals LLC was listed as 242 Lincoln Blvd Fl 2, Middlesex NJ 08846. So, naturally, I put that into google maps and saw that a Cub Liquors store was there, as was the Superfresh market. No Fresh Air Rentals. I kept going deeper and deeper into the search results and couldn’t find anything. No website, no apparent business presence, nothing.

So then I started looking at the name of the donor – Francesco Pinelli. Now, obviously, there is a Pinelli Dr. in Piscataway, over in the Birch Run Condos. And that did set some bells ringing in my head. But surely this was a coincidence. There couldn’t be a developer who was so connected in Piscataway that they named a street after themselves in some big development AND who also owned some kind of bouncy house rental company (I know, I know, the bouncy house thing. It’s embarrassing. As was my failure to note that there was also a Massimo Pinelli on the list, whose employer was MFJ Builders LLC. Look, you wade through enough of this stuff and sometimes you can’t see the forest for the trees...)

Anyway, Francesco has a remarkably limited web presence. A search of his name with “Piscataway” yields very little...EXCEPT a note in the July 21, 2020 Piscataway Council Meeting Minutes “RESOLUTION – Authorizing Return of Escrow Fees: Tower Realty Group LLC – Francesco Pinelli”.

So I started googling Tower Realty Group LLC. Another dead end. No web presence. Except, of course, the fact that there is a Tower Blvd in Piscataway that runs through Cedar Woods Condominiums. But c’mon, there’s NO WAY that a bouncy house renter can also be behind two large condo developments in Piscataway, right? That would just be ridiculous.

So on I went. Eventually I decided to pull the Certificate of Formation for Fresh Air Rentals LLC from the NJ Treasury Dept. Division of Revenue and Enterprise Services. And there it was,

under “Business Purpose” on the certificate: “Real Estate Building and Management”. Ohhhh. No bouncy houses after all. The fog started to lift.

But I still couldn’t quite put it all together. And I had to let it go, because I was deep down the rabbit hole of documenting the engineering firms’ connections and, let’s face it, there are only so many hours in a day. But the Curious Case of Fresh Air Rentals was gnawing at me...

So I reached out to my friend who had solved the Mystery of Waggoner Engineering and, because he is a lot better at this than I am, he responded almost instantly. “Yeah. Looked them up in the tax records. They own that condo complex at 37 Old New Brunswick Road.” Ohhh, that new condo complex across the street and up the road a bit from Tanglewood Terrace Apartments. Got it. Case solved.

Now, if you’ve hung with me this far, I appreciate it. And what I want to say is this. There is a campaign donor to Wahler & Co. who has developed at least one, and possibly two, and maybe three complexes in Piscataway. I find this incredibly ironic given that in multiple places the Wahler Machine and/or its proxies have tried to scare people by claims along the lines of “Staci Berger just wants to build high density housing developments all over town”.

Leaving aside the classist and racist implications of that particular dog whistle for a moment, and also leaving aside the fact that there is almost no buildable vacant land left in Piscataway, and what little there is left is being swallowed up by giant warehouses, the point is this: every one of their accusations is an admission. It is the Wahler Machine (and its predecessors, all of which for the last 50 years are some incarnation of the Ted Light – Bob Smith – Brian Wahler Machine (edit: with the exception of Helen Merolla, which is among the reasons they forced her out)) that have actually presided over every single bit of development, over-development, and over-over-development for the last 5 decades.

And continues to do so today. And will continue to do so until there is no land to build on. And when that happens they’ll start knocking down the old, failed projects (like all the vacant office space from when they apparently went all-in on the office park boom and bust cycle), and do it again. And every time the developers will get richer, and the political machine's campaign coffers will get filled. And, in the end, there’s nothing curious about that at all – it’s just business as usual.



FOLLOW THE MONEY



Follow the Money Part 5 Send in the Lawyers

PART 5: Send in the Lawyers

As I mentioned in another post, law is the most natural profession for anyone looking to monetize political office (Exhibit A being our local State Senator, Bob Smith, who has made an exceptionally good living representing clients before Planning and Zoning Boards that are stacked with Machine loyalists).

But that particular gravy train runs in both directions. It turns out that there is a great deal of legal work that needs doing by local government, and who better to profit from this than lawyers who make campaign contributions to the local politicians? Here's how that looks with donations to Wahler & Co. here in Piscataway...

Clarkin and Vignuolo – contributions so far: \$4,250

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Legal Services Assistant Township Attorney Clarkin & Vignuolo

Rainone Coughlin Minchello – contributions so far: \$1,000

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Legal Services Labor Relations Counsel Rainone Coughlin Minchello

Legal Services Special Legal Counsel / Conflict Attorney Rainone Coughlin Minchello

Legal Services Special Legal Counsel / Conflict Attorney Rainone Coughlin Minchello

John Kawczynski - contributions so far: \$500

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Legal Services Municipal Prosecutor John Kawczynski, Esq. of Field & Kawczynski

Thomas Lanza - contributions so far: \$500

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Legal Services Municipal Prosecutor Thomas Lanza of Lanza & Lanza

Michael F Lombardi - contributions so far: \$3,000

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Legal Services Planning Board Attorney Lombardi & Lombardi

John Wisniewski - contributions so far: \$1,500

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Legal Services Public Defender John S. Wisniewski of Wisniewski & Associates

Legal Services Special Legal Counsel / Conflict Attorney Wisniewski & Associates

James Harding - contributions so far: \$500

From the January 3, 2023 Council Minutes

WHEREAS, after a thorough analysis of the sealed proposals received, the Township Administration recommended the following individuals/firms for the designated professional services for the Township of Piscataway at the rates set forth on the rate sheets annexed to their proposals, subject to the terms of the RFQ and the availability of funds:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE INDIVIDUAL / FIRM

Legal Services Public Defender James M. Harding

Legal Services Rent Leveling Board Attorney James M. Harding LLC

Legal Services Special Legal Counsel / Conflict Attorney James M. Harding, Esq.



Follow the Money Part 6 That's a Wrap

PART 6: That's a Wrap

So I could write considerably more on this topic, but there are other things to get to and, frankly, I think the point has been made. I hope you all found this as informative and enjoyable to read

as it was to write. For fans of the series, please stay tuned for the upcoming series “Mythbusters – Piscataway Edition” where we will examine some common myths circulating this campaign season and lay out some facts that folks may or may not know....

So, to recap... In part one, we noted that out of \$70,500 in campaign contributions received by Wahler & Co. thus far, only \$1,000 had come from a contributor with a Piscataway address, and raised the question “Why is so much out of town capital flowing into Piscataway to finance the election efforts of the local Democratic Machine?”

In part two, we examined where that money was coming from by industry (a staggering 61% coming in from engineering firms), and asked the question “Why is such a large amount of money coming in from engineering firms, lawyers, and developers?”

In part three, we answered that question with regard to engineering firms, detailing how the same engineering firms that appeared on the campaign donation lists also appeared repeatedly in the Council minutes as they were awarded lucrative contracts with the township. In an update to part 3, we dove deeper into the case of Waggoner Engineering to try and figure out why \$10,000 in campaign contributions would come from an engineering firm located in Mississippi. Turns out they have ties to our old friend CME Associates, documented as one of the worst abusers of the pay-to-play system.

In part four, we looked into The Curious Case of Fresh Air Rentals and saw that, far from being a bouncy house renter, Wahler campaign contributor Fresh Air Rentals is actually tied into multiple so-called “high-density housing” developments in Piscataway.

In part five, we examined the ties of the lawyers donating to the Wahler campaign, in much the same way as we had previously looked at the engineers.

All of this work has led me to the conclusion that our local politicians are bought and paid for by out-of-town special interests who profit from doing business with the Township. As always, you are free to draw your own conclusions and decide what should be done about that.