



FREE

June 4 - 10, 2014

Formal Response From Don Shea, STPED

With Regard To The CW Economic Development Series, Pt. 1

Dear Mr. Gates:

I noted with great interest your May 28 article entitled CW Economic Development Educational Series: How Major Economic Development Occurs in St. Tammany Parish, and I am moved to write this in response to the significant errors in that story. I hope that this will set the record straight for your readers, and enable them to be educated about local economic development in a factual and accurate way.

For starters, you begin two paragraphs with the word "Above..." which strongly implies that there is some sort of hierarchy or reporting relationship among the several organizations, both public and private sector, that are involved in the delivery of economic development services in our community. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are lucky to have a wide range of such groups and individuals committed to strengthening and expanding the business and employment bases in St. Tammany. Those mentioned in your article work very closely together, and indeed complement each other, but there is no structural relationship between or among them. For example, my Department (a public agency) works closely every day with the St. Tammany Economic Development Foundation (a private concern) to attract new employers to our area, promote the use of business incentives, support existing employers, and to represent our Parish to regional, Statewide, and national groups. We are pleased with this symbiotic relationship, and we frequently collaborate with and rely on both large Chambers of Commerce in St. Tammany, as well as the Northshore Business Council (NBC), Covington Business Association (of which I am a member), and many other organizations. There are several other examples of overlapping membership and participation in multiple groups by many individuals.

Additionally, your story states quite erroneously that the Northshore Business Council "directs" the St. Tammany Economic Development Foundation. That is simply untrue. The NBC directs itself, and the STEDF directs itself. It's as simple as that. Furthermore, contrary to your statement, the NBC is not affiliated in any way with the government affairs website www.standupsttammany.org. That website is owned and operated strictly by the St. Tammany West Chamber of Commerce, as clearly stated on the home page of that website.

Be sure and visit www.covingtonweekly.com!

CW Economic Development Educational Series:

How Major Economic Development Occurs In St. Tammany Parish, Pt. 2

I sent the following list of questions to GNO, Inc. via e-mail: I know Mr. David Fennelly (GNO, Inc. Board Member) through the St. Tammany Art Association, and I have volunteered my musical time for New Heights Therapy Center. Summer Grove is beautiful, and if you have been there, you know what I am talking about. It is a perfect example of why people love north shore living.

With regard to regional economic development, there is a great amount of evidence to support emerging renewable industries such as solar and industrial hemp, and several states have written industrial hemp clauses into their farm bills. What specifically is GNO, Inc. doing to explore and implement emerging renewables?

How would you describe your working relationship with the Bureau of Governmental Research and the Northshore Business Council?

The Northshore Business Council has formal research indicating that St Tammany is best suited for heavy industry and defense industry contracting. I find this to be very incongruent with the subsequent messages of natural beauty and healthy lifestyles on the northshore, and in fact I find it contradictory. I am curious about GNO, Inc.'s position regarding heavy industrial operations on the northshore. I viewed a chart from your website, the "Ugly" chart -- is this an acronym, or was it named as such because it is visually unappealing?

Are there mechanisms in place to prevent cross pollination of board members from boards of other orgs.? Does GNO, Inc. pay excise tax? We are waiting to receive a response. Incidentally, it was announced Monday afternoon that Governor Bobby Jindal would delay signing Senate Bill 469 at the request of the State Attorney General's office.

"Conflict of Interest", Encyclopedia Of Business, 2nd Ed.

"Black's Law Dictionary" describes 'conflict of interest' as being in connection with "public officials and fiduciaries and their relationship to matters of private interest or gain to them" in situations where regard for one duty tends to lead to disregard of another. John R. Boatright expanded the definition beyond public officials and fiduciaries to all "agency" relationships where the agent has the duty and obligation to act in the best interest of a principal. Boatright's definition applies to organizations acting as agents or principals, as well as to individuals.

The Internal Revenue Service imposes heavy excise taxes on private foundations for engaging in prohibited acts of self-dealing with the foundation's substantial contributors, managers, owners, or business affiliates, and current rules extend to all nonprofit educational institutions and hospitals. www.referenceforbusiness.com

Formal Response From Don Shea, Continued

It serves as an information resource on local issues such as hydraulic fracturing, State issues such as transportation, and federal issues such as healthcare.

As near as I can determine, you did not communicate directly with any representatives of any of the agencies named in preparing your story. Perhaps if you had done so, you could have avoided so many misleading and false statements. I would be very happy to visit with you, the Covington Business Association, or any other group that may need further clarification about the role and purpose of all organizations involved in the economic growth of St. Tammany Parish. Thank you for this opportunity to provide the facts to your readers.

Don Shea, Dir. of Economic Development, St. Tammany Parish

CW Formal Response To Don Shea's Formal Response

Points Of Clarification For Don Shea, Dir., STPED

I responded to Mr. Shea via e-mail, explaining that I would be happy to run his response. I did however, have a few points that needed clarification, and I sent him the following list of questions:

1. Do any of these non-related organizations discussed pay excise tax? (see article, "Conflict of Interest")
2. Are there mechanisms in place to prevent cross-pollination with regard to board membership of organizations?
3. I am still confused as to how the situation of private organizations influencing public organizations does not constitute a "hierarchy or reporting relationship", as you phrased. Can you please clarify?
4. If these organizations are truly autonomous, why does cross-pollination of board members exist?
5. The NBC website mentions "formal research" with regard to industries best suited to this area. Can you please provide the institution/organization/group that conducted the research, and who was polled?

I received a phone call from Mr. Shea in response to my email. He initially stated that he would not respond to my questions, saying that it was "a colossal waste of time". Upon further conversation, he explained that he was unaware of what an excise tax was, and that he felt the reference to 'cross-pollination' was misplaced - this wasn't biology. He went on to mention another article published on my personal Facebook account, in which I referred to his response as 'heavy handed'. His response, he stated, was initiated by my allegations. I stopped him there and asked, "What allegations did I make?" His tone dropped slightly and said that he didn't know where I was going with this, but he didn't like it. And that is one point on which we can definitely both agree, because I Don't Like It Either.

As Director of Economic Development for St. Tammany, Don Shea is a public servant. He has an obligation to respond reasonably and professionally to questions that are asked reasonably and professionally concerning the process of economic development in St. Tammany Parish. - T.A.G.

Quote of the Week

"To exploit an agency relation for personal gain is to violate the bond of trust that is an essential part of the relation." - John R. Boatright

Thursday

June 5



First Quarter

Covington's Natural Beauty Conducive To Good Health

From The Historic To The Present, Covington A Great Place To Be Well

The natural beauty and charm of Covington is everywhere for you to see: the densely-treed green neighborhoods, the quaint lines of historic downtown that meander along with the Bogue Falaya river, the fresh air and the pristine aquifer running beneath us, the abundance of local talent in music, theater, dance, art & cuisine, and the creative, lively locally-owned businesses.

Have you ever noticed, too, that (especially for such a relatively small town), we're bursting at the seams with health-based businesses? On practically every downtown corner, on the 190 corridor and on Hwy 21, you'll find them: gyms & fitness centers (large & small), wellness centers, yoga classes, pilates studios, bicycle shops, acupuncturists, massage therapists, dentists, health food stores, doctors of all kinds, hospitals and specialty medical treatment centers. Covington is home to one of the busiest, most prolific farmers markets on the North Shore, offering not only conventional local produce, meat & seafood, but organic and grass-fed options.

With the restoration of the Southern Hotel and Covington's recent Bicentennial celebrations, you might have learned that one of Covington's earliest and most profitable industries was, in fact, not an actual product, but the town's healing air and waters. The Southern Hotel was originally a health resort - one of many that were built - enticing visitors from all around to breathe the special "ozone air" and the cleansing scent of balsam pine, bathe in the area's healing springs and imbibe the pure, mineral-rich waters. In 1891, the US government even declared Covington "the healthiest place in the United States."

When you consider this, it makes perfect sense that our town attracts and supports a community that considers health a priority and that enjoys the beauty of nature and the opportunities for fishing, swimming, boating, play, and other outdoor enjoyments it provides. Covington's natural beauty, its clean air and the waters that run through the town and beneath it still pull in visitors and new residents and help support a thriving health and healing culture, which, in turn, contributes to a healthy local economy. What an amazing, unique and valuable legacy we have inherited from the natural environs that support us and from those who came before us! So, next time you're out and about town, be sure to drop into a local gym, wellness center, yoga or pilates class, maybe give acupuncture or massage therapy a try, take a stroll to the Wednesday and Saturday farmers market and stock up on delicious local produce, and then go for a picnic on the banks of the Bogue Falaya. The fun and healthy possibilities are endless!

Liz Bragdon is a Yoga Instructor and Movement Educator at Our Place Studio in Downtown Covington. Learn more about Liz's work at www.move-with-me.com and www.opcovington.com!

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ZAGAT

Covington Weekly

June 4 - 10, 2014

Covington Farmer's Market - Wednesdays, 10 am - 2 pm @ the Covington Trailhead
Stop by for lunch! Rain or shine, live "front porch jam", fresh local produce and delicious prepared foods. - 419 N. New Hampshire St.

Covington Farmer's Market - Saturdays, 8 am - 12 pm @ the 600 block of Columbia St.
Music by Chris Talley and Friends at 9:30 am. Taryn's Crabcakes will sample and sell their wonderful dish. - 600 block of Columbia St.

Covington Brewhouse Brewery Tours - Every Saturday, 10 am - 2 pm @ Covington Brewhouse Free tours of the brewhouse - covingtonbrewhouse.com for info.

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Covington Business Association

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