

From: Skip Hoagland
Sent: 2/19/2015 3:18:08 PM
To: John Buchanan; David Jennings; John E. Rosen
Cc: Tom Davis; Weston Newton; mark@marksanford.com; Tim Scott; Haley, Nikki; Veldran, Katherine; Gerard Mahieu; airyhall@yahoo.com; Steve Carrol; Robert Smith; Parrish, Duane; Kevin Meany; zmurdock@beaufortgazette.com; Ashley Landess; Mare Baracco Deckard; Terry Finger; Billy Keyserling; David Hucks
Subject: Fwd: Charleston Area CVB and SC FOIA law

John I am sending this on to others to make it clear in our opinion and opinion of others , as well as other forencic audits done on CVBs around the country Helen hill and Charleston Cvb will not escape from revealing massive wrong doing , abuse ,violations and perhaps equal or worse than Hilton head . The mayor and city council will need to accept this at some point in time . No escape in the end . Right is might !The SC attorney general as well as the dept of justice must now get involved . Thx

Our list includes
Refusal of transparency and SC FOIA laws
IRS tax violations 501-c6 tax codes and UBIT
Corruption in different forms
Abuse of funds
Unfair trade business and competitive practices
Excessive salaries , expenses
Local biding process
And more

To only way to prove you and I wrong and confirm all we say is with deep independent investigative audits like Palm beach , New Orleans , etc Thx

Sent from my iPhone excuse all typos and misspellings

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Begin forwarded message:

From: John Buchanan <jtwg50@yahoo.com <<mailto:jtwg50@yahoo.com>>>
Date: February 19, 2015 at 1:01:18 PM EST
To: "rileyj@charleston-sc.gov <<mailto:rileyj@charleston-sc.gov>>"

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Subject: Charleston Area CVB and SC FOIA law
Reply-To: John Buchanan <jtwg50@yahoo.com <mailto:jtwg50@yahoo.com>>

Mr. Mayor and Members of the Charleston City Council:

I am a national-media journalist and longtime expert on the operations (and foibles) of so-called Convention & Visitors Bureaus, known as CVBs and also as Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs). My journalistic credits include my current status as a reporter for Hotel News Now, the global hotel business website published by Smith Travel Research, and regular monthly contributions to a number of leading meeting-and-convention magazines. My major-media credits include Reuters, the Washington Post, New York Newsday, the Los Angeles Times and major websites such as FoxNews.com <<http://FoxNews.com>> and CNN.com <<http://CNN.com>>.

In particular, I am an expert on the common abuses typically uncovered when an independent audit or media investigation of a CVB is performed. And it is not at all uncommon for top executives of CVBs to be found guilty of serious financial crimes, such as embezzlement, as a result of independent audits ordered by their funding municipalities. For example, the former Controller of

the Palm Beach (FL) CVB was convicted and sentenced to prison for embezzling \$1.5 million over three years. And incredibly, the outside audit firm that performed the CVBs "internal" audits missed the embezzlement for each of those years and later refused to cooperate in the county's audit because of its potential criminal culpability. A copy of that audit is attached here for your review.

In Philadelphia, the now former CFO committed embezzlement that when discovered internally was covered up by top executives. The Philadelphia Inquirer exposed it -- and the cover-up.

Even without criminal wrongdoing, because of the inefficiency, waste and outrageous extravagance that is typically found in CVBs audits, in cities and towns large and small across the U.S., CVB executives and attorneys resist them like the plague.

And yesterday, my request as a journalist for the CVB's financial records, under South Carolina's FOIA law, was declined by attorney David Jennings. In fact, I represent -- as a media consultant and CVB expert -- Mr. Skip Hoagland, who has a FOIA lawsuit pending against the Greater Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and Visitors and Convention Bureau. In his response to me yesterday, Mr. Jennings cited that lawsuit and said he expects it to go to the South Carolina Supreme Court for final resolution. The SC FOIA law clearly states that any entity that receives even part of its funding from public sources is liable under the law. The South Carolina Press Association states the same interpretation for journalists.

In 2013, a landmark court ruling found that because the New Orleans CVB receives public funds that it is liable to the state's open records law. And of course, upon subsequent examination, the records disclosed found the typical waste and abuses I cited earlier.

Yet the CVBs in Hilton Head and Charleston have steadfastly refused to comply with records requests from Mr. Hoagland and a number of local media entities such as the Island Packet in Hilton Head -- even though the law clearly states they are liable based on their receipt of public funds.

To any reasonable person, I believe, such refusal indicates an obvious concern at the CVBs about what might be found -- and based on history likely will be found -- in those records with regard to the misuse of public funds. Furthermore, I have been told by reliable sources in the Charleston hospitality community that there is no doubt in their minds that CVB head Helen Hill is guilty of criminal offenses that will land her in prison if uncovered.

Given such serious allegations, I am writing to ask you to support and order an independent audit of the Charleston Area CVB.

I trust that as public officials, you agree that it is in the public interest -- and within your direct responsibility -- to ensure that every dollar of state and local tax money allocated to the CVB is spent efficiently and judiciously.

Therefore, I am posing a simple Yes/No question: Will you support an