

Brownlow, Kellie

From: Brownlow, Kellie
Sent: Monday, August 03, 2015 4:07 PM
To: 'Klepal, Dan (CMG-Atlanta)'
Cc: Duncan, Todd (CMG-Atlanta)
Subject: RE: Kell questions

Dan,

Chairman Lee's answers to all of your questions are below. Per our previous discussions, to ensure that both the facts and Chairman Lee's responses are accurately reported, it is our policy to keep all communications in writing.

Thank you

Kellie

Kellie Anne Brownlow
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Cobb County Chairman's Office
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One additional question for you related to Ms. Kell. Her resume says that she is a "partner" in COMM360, which implies an ownership stake in the county's paid lobbyist.

Will the county require her to dis-invest from the company before assuming her role as Cobb communications director?

I would expect any new employee of the County to remove themselves from their prior professional endeavors and affiliations. To this point, it is my understanding that Sheri Kell has communicated with you about her role and association with COMM360, including her intention to permanently remove herself from all client work and from the COMM360 website prior to beginning her employment with Cobb County.

Since Sheri's her mother-in-law is chairperson of your re-election campaign, should you have recused yourself from voting to hire her?

Out of 133 applicants, Sheri Kell was the most highly qualified professional recommended for this position by the County Manager, as is the process provided in Cobb County Code Sec. 2-32. The original applicant pool was narrowed to 65 after screening by Human Resources. A staff committee further narrowed the field to 7 candidates who were then interviewed by the committee. Out of this process, 4 individuals were recommended to the County Manager for a second round of interviews with him. Only at this point did I become involved in the process and participate in the interviews with the County Manager. County Manager David Hankerson made an independent, formal recommendation to me that Sheri Kell be appointed the Director of Communications. Acting upon his recommendation, I made a motion to the Board of Commissioners to accept the County Manager's recommendation and appoint Sheri Kell as Communications Director.

While Carole Kell has been listed on my disclosure forms since 2009, her name does not denote a role that requires her to be active in my campaign. I have had absolutely zero discussions with her regarding Ms. Kell's application for the position. Neither did anyone associated with my campaign suggest Ms. Kell be the candidate selected for the job.

Not one person tried to influence my vote, which was based solely on Sheri Kell's credentials, performance in the selection process, and most importantly, based on the County Manager's recommendation that she be appointed as Communications Director.

I knew Carole Kell was listed on my disclosure forms throughout this process. I considered carefully whether this posed an ethical issue with respect to my duties and responsibilities. After weighing all factors of which I was aware and which are discussed above, I determined in good conscience that there was no conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest in my bringing forward the appointment of Sheri Kell as Communications Director.

Since Sheri Kell worked at a campaign fundraiser last month, should you have recused yourself from voting to hire her?

No. As I have previously disclosed to the Marietta Daily Journal and as was reported in an article on July 24, before Ms. Kell's appointment by the BOC, she was hired as a sub-contractor to do event planning and video production only for a single event for my campaign. I had limited interaction with her during this process and was not involved at all in the production of the video. In fact, the video was not even shared with me until the actual event.

Do you consider Ms. Kell's experience with COMM360 – the county's lobbyist – as a potential conflict?

I would expect any new employee of the County to remove themselves from their prior professional endeavors and affiliations. To this point, it is my understanding that Sheri Kell has communicated with you about her role and association with COMM360, including her intention to permanently remove herself from all client work and from the COMM360 website prior to beginning her employment with Cobb County.

However, it is important to note that Ms. Kell has not been working with the County's lobbyist, which is the law firm of Garrett McNatt Hennessey & Carpenter 360 (GMHC360), a company that is completely separate from COMM360. Sheri Kell has never had a role with GMHC 360 or its client work.

In reviewing Stephanie Davis' and Yvette Jones' resumes, neither of them list political activities as part of their experience. As you know, Ms. Kell lists her work on Sam Olens' campaigns and her work on the 2012 TSPLOST (your June campaign event is not listed). Why did you want a politically-active person in the position as county communications director, rather than someone with strictly a communications background?

Never once did I suggest the person hired for this position must be politically active. What I did say is that, in addition to her 25 plus years of media and public relations experience, Ms. Kell's political experience, professional relationships in the community and knowledge of all things Cobb County will allow her to hit the ground running from day one.

From: Klepal, Dan (CMG-Atlanta) [mailto:Dan.Klepal@ajc.com]

Sent: Monday, August 3, 2015 12:43 PM

To: Lee, Tim; lee8007@bellsouth.net; Brownlow, Kellie

Cc: Duncan, Todd (CMG-Atlanta)

Subject: RE: Kell questions

Tim:

Thank you,

DK

From: Klepal, Dan (CMG-Atlanta)
Sent: Monday, August 03, 2015 11:01 AM
To: Lee, Tim (TLee@cobbcounty.org); lee8007@bellsouth.net; Brownlow, Kellie (Kellie.Brownlow@cobbcounty.org)
Cc: Duncan, Todd (CMG-Atlanta)
Subject: Kell questions

Tim:

Dan Klepal here. I am working on a story about Sheri Kell's hiring.

Since Sheri's her mother-in-law is chairperson of your re-election campaign, should you have recused yourself from voting to hire her?

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Thank you for answering my questions.

Dan Klepal
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