

Summary

I am filing this complaint alleging that Mayor Michael O'Connor has used the authority, resources, or influence of his public office to seek or direct funding support to Artspiration, a nonprofit organization in which his spouse, Tammy O'Connor, held/holds a leadership and financial interest.

Under the City of Frederick Ethics Ordinance, public officials are prohibited from using the prestige or powers of their office for the private benefit of themselves or a family member, and from participating in matters in which they or an immediate family member have a financial or personal interest.

Statement of Facts

Mayor O'Connor's spouse, Tammy O'Connor, is/was Executive Director/Co-Creator of Artspiration, a nonprofit organization. This role is further specified by the Mayor's 2025 financial disclosure that lists Artspiration Frederick Foundation, Inc., 915 Toll House Avenue, Frederick, MD, 21701 (Non-Profit), and lists Mrs. O'Connor as the Co-Founder as of August 1, 2025. Notably the Disclosure lists the following Departments that were "involved" with the organization: Building, Permitting, Economic Development (the Weinberg, Mayor's Office, Office of Equity and Inclusion and Arts Manager were not listed - see below as the disclosure does not include the use of these departments/offices).

In 2025 and 2026, Mayor O'Connor and his wife, Tammy O'Connor, requested that the City allocate funds to Artspiration, directed staff to support a grant, and advocated for the organization in an official capacity. Throughout these actions there was no attempt to disclose the conflict or neutralize the clear financial gain to the non-profit. An initial self-led investigation proves these violations yet additional discovery should be made to determine the full depth of the use of city resources to benefit Artspiration.

Additional investigation is also required to determine the role of the Planning Commission and relationship with the landlord for the 915 Toll Avenue property. The first time I was asked to pay for document requests in preparation of this complaint was after I requested information regarding the landlord's intersection with the Mayor, Tammy O'Connor, and Natasha Valencia (Artspiration's other co-Creator who was also appointed by Mayor O'Connor to serve on the City of Frederick's Planning Commission). That document request was at a price of more than \$1,100 and the state Ombudsman will be notified that City resources are being utilized to block these requests.

Provisions Alleged to Be Violated

I allege these facts may violate the City of Frederick Ethics Ordinance provisions governing:

- Conflict of interest — participation in a matter affecting an immediate family member's financial or personal interest.
 - The Ethics Ordinance specifically places restrictions on the Mayor's participation in matters related to Artspiration. Yet, he was included on several emails requesting support for funding requests.
 - *“any matter in which (to the knowledge of the official or employee) the official or employee, or a qualified relative of the official or employee, has an interest”, “a business entity for which the official, employee, or a qualified relative of the official or employee is an officer, director, trustee, partner, or employee”, - Chapter 21 Ethics: Sec. 21-4. - Conflicts of interest*
 - *“an official or employee may not accept, directly or indirectly, a gift from any person or entity that the official or employee knows, or has reason to know: (A) Has or is negotiating a contract with the City; (B) Is engaged in an activity regulated or controlled by the City; (C) Has financial interests that may be substantially and materially affected, in a manner distinguishable from the public generally, by the performance or nonperformance of the official duties of the official or employee” - Chapter 21 Ethics: Sec. 21-4. - Conflicts of interest*
- Misuse of prestige of office — using the position for the private benefit of a family member. Mayor O'Connor and Tammy O'Connor clearly utilized the Mayor's public position to benefit Artspiration. This abuse reaches beyond the City to requests for \$2,000,000 in state funds as a request from the Mayor's office.
 - *“Using or attempting to use the official's or employee's official position improperly to unreasonably request, grant, or obtain in any manner any unlawful or unwarranted privileges, advantages, benefits or exemptions for the official or employee or another person” - Chapter 21 Ethics: Sec. 21-4*
 - *“Using, for immediate private financial gain or advantage, City time or the City's staff, facilities, equipment or supplies to secure privileges or exemptions for the official or employee or others.” - Chapter 21 Ethics: Sec. 21-4*
 - *“An employee or an appointed official may not use public resources or the title of the employee or appointed official to solicit a contribution. An elected official may not use public resources to solicit a contribution.” - Chapter 21 Ethics: Sec. 21-4*

- Financial disclosure / recusal obligations, the Mayor and his wife failed to disclose the relationship or recuse themselves as work for Artspiration within multiple City departments progressed for months. Importantly, attempts to understand the Planning Department's intersection with 915 Toll Avenue and the landlord who is responsible for the lease for the Artspiration lease were met with immediate staff resistance. As a reminder, the Legal Department directly reports to Mayor O'Connor. The financial disclosure failed to accurately list the Departments involved in the support of Artspiration as well as the connection to the Mayor's appointment, Natasha Valencia. Ms. Valencia is listed as a Co-Creator and was a political candidate as well as appointed Planning Commission and Education Commission member appointed by Mayor Michael O'Connor. This relationship should have been disclosed.
 - *"With respect to any interest transferred, in whole or in part, at any time during the reporting period, a description of the interest transferred, the nature and amount of the consideration received in exchange for the interest, and, if known, the identity of the person to whom the interest was transferred; and (D) With respect to any interest acquired during the reporting period, the date when, the manner in which, and the identity of the person from whom the interest was acquired; and the nature and amount of the consideration given in exchange for the interest or, if acquired other than by purchase, the fair market value of the interest at the time acquired."* - Chapter 21 Ethics: Sec. 21-5. - Financial disclosure—Elected officials and candidates.
- The disclosure does not list a real estate interest at 915 Toll House Avenue. If the lease for Artspiration to occupy 915 Toll House Avenue was less than market rate this should have been disclosed as a gift. According to the Ethics law the disclosure should *"include a schedule of each gift in excess of twenty dollars (\$20.00) in value and any series of gifts totaling in excess of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) in value received during the reporting period from or on behalf of, directly or indirectly, any one person who does business with or is regulated by the City or from an association, or any entity acting on behalf of an association, that is engaged only in representing counties or municipal corporations."* - Chapter 21 Ethics: Sec. 21-5. - Financial disclosure—Elected officials and candidates.
- An investigation should be made into the landlord's interactions with the City from at least early 2024 to present day to determine any additional conflicts. A review of existing disclosures should be conducted: did the Mayor, Mrs. O'Connor, and Ms. Valencia disclose the relationship with the landlord for 915 Toll House Avenue when that individual had other business dealings with the

City? Attempts to research the relationship with "Nemu Land Trust", "Dr. Swami Nathan", "Nemo Business Trust" or "Nemo Trust" were met with a sudden \$1,181.44 cost for the information (June 3rd letter); this shielding was a departure and sudden reversal of process.

- Additional historical names associated with Dr. Nathan, the owner of 915 Toll House Avenue include:
 - Padmini Nathan
 - "SPNN Family Partnership"; the relationship goes back to March 30, 2000 which was a lease with the City of Frederick for 100 East All Saints Street, the ultimate site of the new City of Frederick Police Headquarters
 - SPNN Family LLC
 - SPNN Irrevocable Trust
 - SPNN Family-Curtis Farm LLC
 - SPNN Family-Sub, LLC
 - Nathan Frederick Farming and Leasing, LLC
 - S A Nathan Farms #1 LLC
 - P R Nathan Farms #1 LLC
 - Amber Meadows Business Park
 - Mercer Property
 - Sunnyside or Sunny side Farm
 - Alagu Thiruvengadem
 - Daedalean, Inc.
 - E.S. Chelliah

Supporting Documentation

The following materials have been revealed in self-requested independent Freedom of Information Act requests in support of this complaint. The Ethics Commission should have enough information to conduct an independent investigation; this cannot be denied. An independent unbiased attorney should be retained to conduct this investigation.

A June 3, 2026 letter was sent to me that would require a payment of more than \$1,100 to provide additional supporting documentation. Although I am a sitting City Councilmember, I made these requests as a private citizen. These requests are surface level information requests that have yielded documents that point to a much wider culture of corruption and actions by the Mayor to utilize City resources for personal gain.

These documents and screenshots are available upon request but should not be the end of the investigation as my access to information has been severely limited by the Mayor and his staff.

The Ethics Commission must seek to conduct an independent inquiry into these matters. All information I have gathered and will continue to research is available using a Google Drive link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16RKsIS8342Z55GD9il4WOnhPCCHYSFGi?usp=drive_link

Direct Fund Solicitations

- October 1, 2025 email to Mayor O'Connor's Executive Assistant requesting a letter of grant support on Mayoral letterhead, including a request to rush the document
- December 8, 2025 email to City of Frederick Economic Development staff to pursue City of Frederick GROW grant
- January 22, 2026 email to the Economic Development City of Frederick staff, requesting sponsorship of Mosaic Pillar Project
- January 29, 2026 email to the Weinberg Center City of Frederick staff, requesting sponsorship of Mosaic Pillar Project
- March 9, 2026 email to Mayor O'Connor's Executive Assistant and Chief of Staff requesting a letter of grant support on Mayoral letterhead, including a request to rush the document
- March 12, 2026 email containing a fundraising solicitation to City employees
- State of Maryland Bond Fact Sheet for Artspiration within City of Frederick employee email for \$2,000,000
- Ongoing engagement of City of Frederick Economic Development staff (Kennedi "Kiki" Wilson) to be an active fundraiser and solicit funds for Artspiration ([AF Challenge | Artspiration Frederick Foundation Inc](#): <https://givebutter.com/gL05vI/kennediwl>)
- Ongoing utilization of Ms. Wilson's company Out40 for the benefit of Artspiration; additional investigation should be conducted to determine how much, if any, city staff time was used to support Artspiration. The article in support of Artspiration includes a link to fundraising.

Use of Staff in Support of Artspiration

- Ongoing communication and fundraising report from Kiki Wilson, Economic Development Specialist for the City of Frederick
- Ongoing communication to Laila Abdul-Jadallah, Manager of Arts and Culture for the City of Frederick
- Tammy O'Connor information request to support Artspiration's February event to Lakisha Wade, Manager of Equity and Inclusion for the City of Frederick and Laila Abdul-Jadallah, Manager of Arts and Culture for the City of Frederick (email November 5, 2025)
- Tammy O'Connor information request regarding zoning for Artspiration property to Dustin Nusbaum, Chief Building Code Official for the City of Frederick on April 11, 2025