Sheri Damon - Petrovich Development Company / Seaside Development Project (2891-009)

From:

Laura Cummings < LCummings @herumcrabtree.com>

To:

"sdamon@ci.seaside.ca.us" <sdamon@ci.seaside.ca.us>

Date:

5/22/2020 10:28 AM

Subject:

Petrovich Development Company / Seaside Development Project (2891-009)

CC:

Steve Herum <sherum@herumcrabtree.com>

Attachments: 2891-009 - Letter to City Attorney.pdf

Good morning Ms. Damon:

Attached please find a letter to you from Steve Herum, prepared on behalf of our client Petrovich Development Company, regarding the above-entitled matter. If you have any questions or comments regarding the attached letter, please contact Mr. Herum directly.

Sincerely,

Laura Cummings

Legal Assistant to Steven A. Herum Karna E. Harrigfeld Hon. Lesley D. Holland, Ret.

HERUM\CRABTREE\SUNTAG

T: 209.472.7700 \ F: 209.472.7986 5757 Pacific Avenue, Suite 222, Stockton, CA 95207 www.herumcrabtree.com \ lcummings@herumcrabtree.com

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Lesley Milton - Re: Public Records Act request

From: Mary Duan <mary@mcweekly.com>
To: Craig Malin <CMalin@ci.seaside.ca.us>

Date: 7/1/2020 5:09 PM

Subject: Re: Public Records Act request

CC: Lesley Milton < LMilton@ci.seaside.ca.us >, Sheri Damon < SDamon@ci.seaside...

Thanks Craig ... and Lesley and Sheri. Appreciate it.

MD

On Wed, Jul 1, 2020 at 4:13 PM Craig Malin < CMalin@ci.seaside.ca.us> wrote:

Mary:

The emails between me and Mr. Petrovich are easy to batch together and we can get them to you tomorrow. ACM Milton will work with IT and City Attorney Damon on the others.

Craig

>>> Mary Duan <<u>mary@mcweekly.com</u>> 7/1/2020 2:46 PM >>>

July 1, 2020

Mary Duan

Monterey County Weekly

668 Williams Ave., Seaside, CA 93955

RE: Public Records Act Request

Dear Craig,

This letter is to request access to City of Seaside records for the purpose of inspection and possible copying, pursuant to the California Public Records Act, Government Code Section 6250 et seq.

The records that I am asking to inspect and have the opportunity to copy are:

All emails sent to or received from Paul Petrovich or anyone employed by Paul Petrovich.

All emails referencing the lawsuit brought against the city of Seaside by The Committee for Sound Water and Land Development on Fort Ord.

The records I'm requesting include electronic correspondence and electronic documents, and include all attachments and enclosures, sent, received, prepared, owned, used, retained, after April 1, 2020. They also include documents scanned into electronic files, residing on a city computer or on a shared computer drive or on a diskette, CD or DVD, and in archived form.

I request those records in the form held by the city of Seaside. If the records are electronic, please forward those to me at mary@mcweekly.com. If the records are kept individually,

please forward them as individual emails and not combined. Government Code § 6253.9, subd. (a).

I believe no provisions of law exist which exempt these records from disclosure. Pursuant to Government Code Section 6257, I ask that you make the records "promptly available" to me for inspection.

If you believe a portion of the information I have requested is exempt from disclosure by express provisions of the law, Government Code Section 6257 additionally *requires* segregation and deletion of that material in order that the remainder of the information may be released.

If you believe that an express provision of law exists to exempt from disclosure all or a portion of the material I have requested, *Government Code Section 6256 requires you notify me of the reasons for the determination not later than 10 days from your receipt of this request.*

Government Code section 6253.1 *requires a public agency to assist the public* in making a focused and effective request by (1) identifying records and information responsive to the request, (2) describing the information technology and physical location of the records, and *(3) providing suggestions for overcoming any practical basis for denying access to the records or information sought.* If you have any questions about this request I expect that you will contact me promptly to discuss them.

If the city determines that any of the information is exempt from disclosure, I ask that they reconsider that determination in view of *Proposition 59*, which amended the state Constitution to require that *all exemptions be "narrowly construed." Proposition 59 may modify or overturn authorities on which the City has relied in the past.*If the City determines that any requested records are subject to a still-valid exemption, I request that: (1) the City exercise its discretion to disclose some or all of the records notwithstanding the exemption; and (2) with respect to records containing both exempt and non-exempt content, the City redact the exempt content and disclose the rest.

Should the city deny part or all of this request, the city is required to provide a written response describing the legal authority on which the City relies, and the names and titles or positions of the person(s) responsible for the denial.

Finally, if you plan to charge me for any expense incurred in complying with this request, please notify me in advance.

Thank you for your timely attention to my request. Sincerely,

Mary Duan

Mary Duan

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	CITY OF SEASIDE OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY SHERI L. DAMON, City Attorney (SBN#16) 440 Harcourt Avenue Seaside, CA 93955 Tel: (831) 899-6890 Fax: (831) 718-8602 cityattorney@ci.seaside.ca.us THE SOHAGI LAW GROUP, PLC R. TYSON SOHAGI, State Bar No. 254235 11999 San Vicente Boulevard, Suite 150 Los Angeles, California 90049-5136 Telephone: (310) 475-5700 Facsimile: (310) 475-5707 Email: TSohagi@sohagi.com	EXEMPT FROM FILING FEES (GOVERNMENT CODE §6103) ELECTRONICALLY FILED BY
10	SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE CALIFORNIA	
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	COUNTY COUNTY COUNTY COUNTY COUNTY COUNTY COUNTY COUNTY COUNTIES IT THROUGH XXX, Respondents, KB BAKEWELL SEASIDE VENTURE II, a Delaware limited liability company; and DOES XXXI-XXXXX, inclusive.	CASE NO.: 20CV001203 REPLY TO OPPOSITION TO MOTION TO DETERMINE WHETHER IDENTITY OF CLIENT IS PRIVILEGED [CCP 128(A)(5)] HEARING INFORMATION: DATE: JULY 7, 2020 TIME: 8:30 A.M. DEPT: 13 HON. JUDGE VILLAREAL ASSIGNED COMPLAINT FILED: April 6, 2020 TRIAL DATE: NONE SET
23 24 25 26 27 28	REPLY IN SUPPORT OF MOTION TO DETERMINE WHETHER IDENTITY OF CLIENT IS PRIVILEGED	- 1 - COMMITTEE FOR SOUND WATER AND LAND DEVELOPMENT OF FORT ORD V. CITY OF SEASIDE, ET AL. CASE NO: 20 CV 001203

I. INTRODUCTION

This Motion requests a determination that the attorney client privilege does not apply to the disclosure of the true identity of the attorneys' client, and that the disclosure may be used as evidence of his client's identity.

While this action purports to be brought on behalf of local citizens, Petitioner's counsel inadvertently admitted the truth. The redacted entity actually behind this case is not the "California non-profit unincorporated association" asserted under penalty of perjury in the Petition. Rather, it is a private economic interest which affirmatively advocated for approval of the Project and certification of the EIR, facts uncontested in the opposition. The true identity of Petitioner has important implications for this case.

Petitioner's response tacitly admits that the unincorporated association is a sham being used to shroud the identity of the real petitioner. It is uncontested that this is the ninth matter Mr. Herum has represented his true client. (Memorandum of P&A p. 7, FN1) ¹ Furthermore, the City can produce evidence that the redacted entity has been previously represented by Mr. Herum, and that the Petition, if successful, would provide a gain to that private economic interest. (Declaration of Sheri L. Damon in support of Reply, Paragraph 2) These facts cannot be reconciled with the uncontested fact that the "Committee" did not exist before 2019, unless the Committee and the redacted entity are one and the same. (Memorandum of P&A p. 7.)

II. THE MATTER IS NOT MOOT

Petitioner's response to its own disclosure cannot be described as anything short of gamesmanship. Petitioner's June 2, 2020 response to the disclosure first asserted that "the first email we sent to you ...incorrectly and inadvertently identified our firm's client as

¹ Mr. Herum's Draft EIR comment letter identified that it was prepared on behalf of client "2891" on matter number "009." (Declaration of Sheri L. Damon in support of Reply, Paragraph 2) This is the same matter number that was included in the subject line of both of the May 22, 2020 emails, which referenced the redacted entity and the "Committee." It strains credulity to believe that Mr. Herum's office utilized the correct client number but the incorrect client name in the May 22 email.

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another entity." However, in the exact same letter, Petitioner's counsel claimed the redacted entity as his client, stating "the identity of our firm's client in this matter was communicated to our firm in confidence. That information [i.e. the redacted entity] is confidential and protected by the attorney client privilege." (Declaration of Sheri L. Damon, filed June 8, 2020, Exhibit E, June 2, 2020 letter.)

After filing the motion, Petitioner's counsel purported to allow disclosure of the June 2 email stating "the Committee hereby withdraws its letters to you claiming the cover email to the revised settlement offer is not subject to disclosure...Withdrawing the letters asserting the email was inadvertent takes away any ethical duty on your part to withhold the email." (Declaration of Steven A. Herum, Exhibit G [June 16, 2020 email].) Thus, Petitioner's counsel was trying to have it both ways—withdraw his claim of privilege but not admit that he had invoked the privilege on behalf of the redacted entity. Obviously, the identity of the Committee was well known as it was the cover name used to plead the case. It is the identity of the real client behind the case that is meaningful.

Accordingly, the City's June 18, 20202 response noted:

...this June 16, 2020 email was sent on behalf of the "Committee," seemingly referencing the "Committee for Sound Water and Land Development of Fort Ord." However, [Redacted entity] is the holder of any claim of privilege, not the "Committee" referenced in your email, unless the two are the same entity, which I believe to be the case. [¶] Therefore, I am assuming you are waiving this and any other claim of privilege or privacy right on behalf of your true client in the current litigation, [Redacted entity]. If this is incorrect, please advise.

Instead of providing a clear response to this straightforward inquiry, Mr. Herum persisted in asserting the fiction that "1) the claim is held by the committee; and 2) the committee has waived the claim." (Declaration of Sheri L. Damon filed herewith, Exhibit A, June 22, 2020 email].) Petitioner cannot claim attorney client privilege on behalf of

² Declaration of Steven A. Herum, Exhibit H.
³ Petitioner asserts that the City "avoids the fact, as is present here that the verification was signed by a resident of the defendant city." (Opp. p. 5.) The City in no way ignores this fact. The City believes that the resident is a strawman for the private economic interests, and will, if needed, seek discovery into this individual's participation in this

the redacted entity, the holder of such a privilege (Evid. Code §§ 952, 953, 954), and then purport to waive that privilege on behalf of a different entity (i.e. the "Committee"). There is no other way to read the assertion of privilege but on behalf of the redacted client. Unless Mr. Herum is prepared to admit that the Committee is in fact the same as his redacted client, this issue is not moot.

Indeed, Petitioner's opposition papers added new Exhibits which redacted a June 18, 2020 email identifying his client. (Dec. of Herum, Exhibit H [June 18, 2020].) If Petitioner was not trying to mislead counsel and this Court as to the identity and participation of the true client, there would be no need for Petitioner's counsel to continue to redact the information or references to the true client. (See also, Declaration of Sheri L. Damon, filed herewith at ¶ 4).

Now, for the first time in Petitioner's opposition papers, and more than a month after the disclosure, Petitioner's counsel asserts his client's identity is protected by the First Amendment, which only serves to muddy the waters even more. As described in the moving papers, this Motion raises the issue of whether the identity of a lawyer's actual client in litigation is privileged by the attorney-client privilege such that the lawyer's inadvertent disclosure of who he really represents is something that the receiving party has a duty not to use or further disclose. As discussed below, it appears that Petitioner, having attempted to withdraw the claim of privilege, is now asserting the information may not be relied upon because of a Constitutional privacy right to bring redress as an unincorporated association. (Opp. pp. 4-6.)

However, in so asserting, Petitioner's opposition completely ignores the precedent cited by the City that (1) his client's identity is not a protected interest (*United States v.*

lawsuit. As noted above, the City has evidence that this is the ninth matter in which Mr. Herum has represented this private economic interest. Furthermore, there are numerous false statements made within this petition which evince the fact that it was not read by the "resident." For example, the Petition seeks a declaration that the project is in violation of "the Tracy General Plan, the Tracy Zoning Code," referencing the City of Tracy on three separate occasions. (Petition, ¶¶ 3 and Introduction.)

Hodge and Zweig (9th Cir. 1977) 548 F.2d 27 1347, 1353; Willis v. Superior Court (1980) 112 Cal.App.3d 277, 291), and (2) that CEQA cases involve discovery into the identity of Petitioner's client. (CREED-21 v. City of Wildomar (2017) 18 23 Cal.App.5th 690 [Court upholding discovery sanctions against a CEQA Petitioner for refusal to comply with discovery order relating to client's identity]; Save Open Space Santa Monica v. Superior Court (2000) 84 Cal.App.4th 235 [Discovery authorized for entity's member as it relates to attorney's fee request under 1021.5 in a land use matter].

III. PETITIONER'S LATE ASSERTION OF A FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHT TO PRIVACY IS WAIVED AND UNSUPPORTED

Petitioner's eleventh-hour attempt to assert a privacy right, made more than a month after the disclosure, should be summarily rejected as waived. When specifically asked about the basis for withholding the identity of his client, Petitioner's response claimed attorney client privilege, and nothing else. (Declaration of Sheri L. Damon, filed June 8, 2020, Exhibit E, June 2, 2020; Evid. Code § 912.)

Furthermore, this issue was addressed at length in the authority cited by the City, i.e. Save Open Space Santa Monica v. Superior Court (2000) 84 Cal.App.4th 235. In that case, the alleged privacy right also pertained to the client's identity in a case involving attorney's fees in a land use matter under 1021.5. That Court expressly noted that "the right of associational privacy is not absolute." (*Id.* at 253.) That court further noted that "the filing of a lawsuit may implicitly bring about a partial waiver of one's constitutional right of associational privacy." (Internal quotes omitted; *Id.* at 253) "Real parties...have a legitimate interest in ensuring that attorney fees are not awarded where the statutory requirements set forth in section 1021.5 are not met... Equally as important as these interests is the state's compelling interest, as reflected in its broad discovery statutes in facilitating the ascertainment of truth in connection with legal proceedings." (Internal quotes omitted; *Id.* at 254.) "To deny those opposing a fee request and, in turn, a trial court, the means to discover whether an organization is litigating a case to further private REPLY IN SUPPORT OF MOTION

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CASE NO: 20 CV 001203

 interests would open the door for abuse of the private attorney general statute." (Id. at 254.)

Petitioner's counsel asserts that its membership is a "distracting shining penny" and that the City's arguments are "unhinged by controlling decisional case law," because his client allegedly has standing. (Opp. p. 6.) Ironically, it is Petitioner's opposition that is unhinged, having ignored nearly every single legal authority cited in the City's motion, and ignoring the fact that this issue is not only relevant to standing, it is also relevant to:

- (1) evaluating the credibility of Petitioner and Petitioner's comments in the administrative record (*Joshua Tree Downtown Business Alliance v. County of San Bemardino* (2016) 1 Cal.App.5th 677, 692 [If there are "legitimate issues regarding the credibility" of a commenter's opinions, then an agency can "deem them not substantial evidence."];
- (2) the City's affirmative defenses, including bad faith and unclean hands for affirmatively advocating for approval of the project and then suing the City under a false name (Declaration of Sheri L. Damon filed herewith Paragraph 2);
- (3) bonding requirements under Code of Civ. Proc § 529.2 [which requires evidence of that Petition was brought in bad faith, vexatiously, and for the purpose of delay]; and
- (4) Petitioner's request for attorney's fees under Code of Civ. Proc. § 1021.5.

This matter is neither moot nor unripe. At a minimum, the Court should find that any disclosure of the actual client's name is not protected by attorney-client privilege and that any First Amendment privacy rights have been waived and that the redacted information may be used as evidence of his client's identity. Further, given the contradictory assertions of Petitioner's counsel, the Court should be prepared to authorize discovery into the true membership in this "Committee." As outlined in the City's moving papers, both the defendants and the Court have an interest in ensuring transparency. Given

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this late assertion, the City has submitted a [REVISED][Proposed] Order for the court's consideration.

IV. CONCLUSION

The matter is ripe for adjudication at this time and is not moot. Moreover, the Court has authority under its power to oversee these proceedings and should authorize disclosure of the information holding there is no attorney client privilege and that any First Amendment privacy right has been waived attached to the use of the information.

As stated in City's moving papers, the widespread abuse of CEQA suits for purposes other than environmental protection is a major factor in driving up the cost of housing in California, contributing to lost opportunities for the most vulnerable and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Conduct and legal gamesmanship such as this only serves to undermine the CEQA process, the judicial process and the public confidence in these proceedings. The City respectfully requests the Court make a determination that the City, the public, and this Court, are entitled to know the real petitioner who is behind this action, and find that counsel's admission of the real petitioner's identity is relevant evidence of that identity.

DATE: June 29th, 2020

Ву:

SHERI L. DAMON, CITY ATTORNEY Attorneys for THE CITY OF SEASIDE

REPLY IN SUPPORT OF MOTION

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CASE NO: 20 CV 001203

	Superior Court of California, County of Monterey On 6/29/2020 2:49 PM By: Erika Ramirez, Deputy
CITY OF SEASIDE	
OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY SHERI L. DAMON, City Attorney (SBN#16642	7)
440 Harcourt Avenue	EXEMPT FROM FILING FEES
Seaside, CA 93955 Tel: (831) 899-6890 Fax: (831) 718-8602	(GOVERNMENT CODE §6103)
cityattomey@ci.seaside.ca.us	(00121111121111111111111111111111111111
THE SOHAGI LAW GROUP, PLC	
R. TYSON SOHAGI, State Bar No. 254235	
11999 San Vicente Boulevard, Suite 150 Los Angeles, California 90049-5136	
Telephone: (310) 475-5700	
Facsimile: (310) 475-5707 Email: TSohagi@sohagi.com	
ATTORNEYS FOR RESPONDENT,	
CITY OF SEASIDE	
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA	
COUNTY OF MONTEREY	
COMMITTEE FOR SOUND WATER AND	Case No.: 20 CV 001203
LAND DEVELOPMENT OF FORT ORD,	0435 No.: 20 0 0 00 1203
Petitioner,	OFOLADATION OF CUEDA
vs	DECLARATION OF SHERI L. DAMON IN SUPPORT OF REPLY
	TO OPPOSITION TO MOTION TO
CITY OF SEASIDE AND DOES 1-XXXX,	DETERMINE WHETHER IDENTITY OF CLIENT IS PRIVILEGED
Respondent(s)	
KB BAKEWELL SEASIDE VENTURE II, a	
Delaware limited liability company; and DOES	HEARING INFORMATION:
XXXI-XXXXX, inclusive.	DATE: JULY 7, 2020 TIME: 8:30A.M.
Real Parties in Interest.	DEPT: 13
	HONORABLE JUDGE VILLAREAL ASSIGNED
	COMPLAINT EU ED. APPU & 2022
	COMPLAINT FILED: APRIL 6, 2020 TRIAL DATE: NONE SET

SUPPORT OF REPLY TO OPPOSITION TO MOTION TO DETERMINE WHETHER IDENTITY OF CLIENT IS PRIVILEGED

COMMITTEE FOR SOUND WATER AND LAND DEVELOPMENT OF FORT ORD v. CITY OF SEASIDE, et al. .
CASE NO. 20 CV 001203

ELECTRONICALLY FILED BY

 I, SHERI L. DAMON, declare under penalty of perjury as follows:

- I am an attorney-at-law licensed to practice in the State of California. I make this
 declaration in support of the City's reply to opposition to motion to determine whether
 the identity of the real client in this matter is privileged or not.
- 2. I have reviewed the administrative record. Petitioner's comment letter on the Draft EIR in August 2019 includes a client file number of 2891 and matter number 009. The City has evidence that Mr. Herum has previously represented the redacted entity. The City has evidence that the redacted entity's private economic interests may be affected depending upon the outcome of this case. Further, the Administrative Record contains evidence that the redacted entity advocated before the City Council for approval of the project and certification of the EIR.
- 3. On or about June 22, 2020, I received an e-mail from Mr. Herum responding to my email to him of June 18, 2020 (attached as Exhibit H, to the Declaration of Steven A. Herum) stating that the "Committee" held the privilege and that he was waiving on behalf of the "Committee". On the same date, I sent a response to Mr. Herum's June 22, 2020 email, again reiterating that the Committee cannot withdraw a privilege asserted on behalf of another entity. A true and correct copy of that email exchange is attached as Exhibit A.
- 4. Even though Petitioner's counsel has purported to withdraw the claim of privilege, which should allow me to recite the redacted entity's name publicly, I have continued to to redact the name out of respect for the judicial process and out of concern that Mr. Herum's withdrawal of the privilege claim was made on behalf of a different entity than

the assertion of the original claim of privilege. Because he has not admitted that the party on whose behalf he asserted the privilege has withdrawn the claim of privilege, I have proceeded with caution.

Executed this 29 day of June, 2020.

SHERI L. DAMON

DECLARATION OF SHERI L. DAMON IN SUPPORT OF REPLY TO OPPOSITION TO MOTION TO DETERMINE WHETHER IDENTITY OF CLIENT IS PRIVILEGED -3 - COMMITTEE FOR SOUND WATER AND LAND DEVELOPMENT OF FORT ORD v. CITY OF SEASIDE, et al. .
CASE NO. 20 CV 001203

Sheri Damon - Re: Committee v. Seaside

From.

Sheri Damon

To:

Steve Herum

Date:

6/22/2020 5:36 PM

Subject:

Re: Committee v. Seaside

The City's administrative record costs are \$19,257.26, not including costs incurred by the City's attorneys while preparing the record. The City reserves the right to recover costs for attorney's fees and any additional costs. Please make a check payable to the City of Seaside, with a notation that the check is for "Administrative Record Costs for Case No. 20CV001203." sent to my attention at the City Attorney's office. Upon receipt of payment, the City shall send an electronic copy of the administrative record.

Sincerely, Sheri L. Damon

Sheri L. Damon City Attorney



PH: 831-899-6890

>>> Steve Herum <sherum@herumcrabtree.com> 6/22/2020 9:05 AM >>>

Responding to your June 18 email: 1) the claim is held by the committee; and, 2) the committee has waived the claim.

Steve Herum

209,472,7700 www.herumerabtree.com

Connect to Us:

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE. This communication and any accomplishing stachments are confidential and privileged. They are intended for the sofe use of the addresser. If you receive this transmission in error, you are advised that any disciousne, copying distribution, or the taking of any action in retiance, upon the communication or accompaning document(s) is strictly prohibited, and the massage mould be immediately deleted with any attachment(s). Moreover, any such madvertent discinsive shall not economise of waive fix attorney-clical privilege or confidentiality to this communication or other viscility in lave received this communication in error, please contact the sender immediately by return electronic mail or by telephone at (209) 472-7700. Transk you