

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION**

In the Matter of a Complaint by Louis DeCilio, Trumbull

File No. 2019-131B

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Complainant filed the instant complaints with the Commission pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes § 9-7b. The following are the Commission's findings of fact and conclusions of law:

ALLEGATIONS

1. Complainant made three separate allegations in his complaint. First, he alleged that some or all of the named Respondents failed to report independent expenditures. This allegation shall be addressed in a separate document.
2. Second, he alleged that some or all of the Respondents violated expenditure limits. This allegation shall be addressed herein.
3. Third, Complainant alleged that some or all of the Respondents committee committed "criminal impersonation of elected officials." As the Commission is not empowered to investigate "criminal impersonation of elected officials," that allegation is not further addressed herein.

STATEMENT OF THE LAW

4. Connecticut election law limits the amount that an individual can contribute to a candidate committee, political committee, and party committee. See e.g., General Statutes § 9-611. General Statutes § 9-601a (1) defines a "contribution" to include "anything of value, made to promote the success or defeat of any candidate seeking the nomination for election, or election for the purpose of aiding or promoting the success or defeat of any referendum question or the success or defeat of any political party[.]"

STATEMENT OF THE FACTS

5. At all times relevant hereto, *Voices of Stratford PAC* was a durational political slate committee registered in the Town of Stratford to make expenditures concerning the November 11, 2019 election.

6. On or about July 24, 2019, Kathleen Callahan and Respondent Karen Tracy registered the Voices of Stratford PAC as a political slate committee within the Town of Stratford Town Clerk.
7. From on or about July 24, 2019 through on or about October 1, 2019, Respondent Karen Tracy was the treasurer of *Voices of Stratford PAC*.
8. At all times relevant hereto, Respondent Monica Brill was the treasurer of the *Stratford Democratic Town Committee*.
9. On or about July 31, 2019, Respondent Steven Marcus registered The Stratford Beacon, LLC with the Secretary of the State. The Stratford Beacon, LLC is a named respondent in this matter.
10. On or about October 28, 2019, The Stratford Beacon, LLC, ordered a billboard advertisement to be placed in the Town of Stratford that read:

FREDETTY'S BACK
RICH FREDETTE IS SLASHIN ALL DEVELOPMENT
10 Years of Republican Rule
& No Real Growth Has Created [sic]
A NIGHTMATE ON MAIN STREET
Don't Let Him Steal Your Dreams – VOTE HIM OUT!

11. The billboard further contained a picture of Richard Fredette's head placed on the body of horror villain Freddy Krueger.
12. Prior to the October 28, 2019 billboard, The Stratford Bacon, LLC purchased two billboards in the Town of Stratford that advocated for affordable housing development, blamed "Republican Leadership" for the lack of new development, and encouraged voters to "Vote out anyone who isn't helping."
13. The cost of the three billboards purchased by The Stratford Beacon, LLC was \$2,005.50. The Stratford Beacon, LLC did not make any public reporting of these expenditures.
14. Each billboard purchased by The Stratford Beacon, LLC did include a "paid for by" attribution. The October 28, 2019 billboard also included the statement, "This message was made independent of any candidate or political committee."

15. Despite the allegations, there was no evidence discovered in the course of the investigation that there was any coordination between The Stratford Beacon, LLC and any candidate, political committee, or town committee.

DISCUSSION


16. As the investigation into this matter revealed no evidence that The Stratford Beacon, LLC coordinated with any other entity, person, or candidate, the expenditures made by The Stratford Beacon, LLC are properly considered independent expenditures. Pursuant to General Statutes § 9-601d, “[a]ny person, as defined in section 9-601, may, unless otherwise restricted or prohibited by law, including, but not limited to, any provision of this chapter or chapter 157, make unlimited independent expenditures, as defined in section 9-601c[.]”
17. As there is no limit on the amount of an independent expenditure or expenditures under Connecticut Election Law, it is the determination of the Commission that this allegation should be dismissed.

ORDER

The following Order is recommended on the basis of the aforementioned findings:

That this matter be dismissed.

Adopted this 20 day of JAN, 2021 at Hartford, Connecticut.



Anthony J. Castagno, Chairperson
By Order of the Commission