



New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics

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Developer Settles with JCOPE For Alleged Lobbying Act Violations Related to Campaign for One New York Donations

Donation Made After Recommendation by Or on Behalf Of New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio

(ALBANY, NY) November 13, 2019 – The New York State Joint Commission on Public Ethics (“Commission”) today announced that as part of its ongoing investigation into donations made to the Campaign for One New York (“CONY”) by entities lobbying the City of New York, it has reached an additional settlement agreement with Douglaston Development LLC.

The Commission’s Lobbying Act gift regulations prohibit lobbyists and their clients from giving gifts to a public official or to third parties on behalf of or at the designation or recommendation of a public official. CONY was a not-for-profit corporation formed in late 2013 by Bill Hyers, Stephanie Yazgi and Ross Offinger, three former campaign officials of Mayor Bill de Blasio (“the Mayor”) for which the Mayor sought and obtained support for his legislative and policy objectives. Offinger, who had served as a fundraiser for the Mayor’s campaign, became CONY’s treasurer and chief fundraiser.

Douglaston Development, LLC agreed to pay \$10,000 after voluntarily producing information and documents and cooperating fully with the Commission’s investigation. In its settlement agreement, Douglaston stipulates that in February 2015, the Mayor contacted a senior executive of the developer and discussed CONY and that Ross Offinger would follow up with the executive. Shortly afterward, Offinger did follow up to discuss financial support for CONY, and, in March, Douglaston donated \$25,000 to CONY.

This is the latest settlement agreement to arise out of an investigation beginning in 2015. In September of this year, the Commission announced settlements with three other developers, Brookfield Financial Properties, LP, Toll Brothers, Inc., and Greenpoint Landing Developers, LLC, two of those settlements coming just ahead of scheduled hearings that the Commission was prepared to undertake. In those two cases, Brookfield agreed to pay \$30,000 to settle its case involving the donation of \$50,000 to CONY by one of its executive officers, while in the second matter, Toll Brothers, Inc. and its subsidiary Toll Brooklyn LP (collectively “Toll”) agreed to pay \$15,000 after stipulating and agreeing that it made a \$25,000 donation

within a month of a personal request from the Mayor to a Toll executive to contribute to CONY. The third September settlement was with Greenpoint Landing Developers, LLC, a company affiliated with Park Towers Group, Ltd., which paid \$20,000 to settle the case of a \$50,000 donation by Park Towers after a meeting among one of its executives also working on the Greenpoint project and the Mayor and Ross Offinger.

In April 2018, the Commission settled allegations of Lobbying Act violations with James Capalino, individually and on behalf of his business, James F. Capalino and Associates, Inc., as well as with New Yorkers for Clean, Livable, and Safe Streets (“NYCLASS”), its co-founder and president Steven Nislick, and board member Wendy Neu. Capalino paid \$40,000, admitting he himself contributed \$10,000 to CONY and secured another \$90,000 in contributions from nine clients who had retained him to lobby the City, the Mayor, and his senior staff. NYCLASS, Nislick, and Neu agreed to pay \$10,000. In both cases, donations were made following direct solicitations by the Mayor.

To read more about these recent settlement agreements, as well as the prior CONY-related settlements, go to www.jcope.ny.gov, click on the ‘Investigations’ tab, and then go to ‘Enforcement Actions.’