

## I've Filed a Lawsuit Against The Chamber as Well as an IRS Whistle-Blower Action.

Unfortunately I wasn't able to attend the recent "Chamber Ball", which I'm told had a Hollywood/Las Vegas theme. It was certainly a fitting theme considering the lavishly brazen behavior the Hilton Head Island/Bluffton Chamber of Commerce has taken in running its 'non-profit' operation and keeping members at arms length from inspecting its books and business practices.

As an owner of a business that is a dues paying Chamber member in good standing, it should only seem right that I should have access to inspect how my Chamber is being operated. Yet, after more than a year of expressing concerns about Chamber policies, secretive

executive committee meetings, and how I believe our Chamber continues to misuse public funds it receives from Accommodations Tax (ATAX) revenues and Parks Recreation & Tourism (PRT), I have been repeatedly and vehemently rebuffed.

Therefore, I'm pushing forward into the courts with a formal request, as is my right under South Carolina Law and its Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and I have also become a "whistle-blower" regarding what I see as significant violations of the IRS Tax Codes which govern 501-C (6) non-profit organizations.

The Chamber attorneys from Columbia (*are there no qualified lawyers locally?*) have pushed back, claiming our Chamber is not "public" under the definition, but merely a "contractor" acting on behalf of local townships – and therefore not subject to FOIA. Yet, who is going to believe that ruse when the Chamber itself calls its V&CB a division (not a separate entity)? The SC Code (30-4-20/c) is quite clear. It doesn't mince words when it defines a "public body" as: "*any organization . . . supported in whole or in part by public funds or expending public funds . . .*"

**I ask: Why all this subterfuge and evasiveness?  
What are you trying to hide, Chamber Board?**

Here are a few of the things I'm trying to uncover:

1. When and by whom were the by-laws changed to make it so complicated for regular members to nominate persons to the board? We must eliminate this "buddy board."
2. Breakdown of all 22 employee salaries and what % is allocated to "public funds."
3. How did Bill Miles' CEO pay package reach \$351,003 plus other gratis golf club memberships and family trips overseas? Compare with SC Governor Haley's \$106,000 salary or President Obama's salary of \$400,000.
4. Who decided to use consultants, agencies and web companies in New York, Canada and elsewhere when there is ample skill locally and in South Carolina?
5. How was it decided to generate chamber revenue for its own pockets in direct competition with local businesses? How much money is being generated from this abuse to local media members and in violation of 501-c6 IRS tax codes?
6. What's the real story behind the \$600/sq.ft. costs of the Welcome Center? Who is behind that?
7. Revenues from all Chamber and V&CB programs and how is the money then being used?

My FOIA lawsuit will hopefully get all of these questions answered and move our chamber to a position where it is operating cost efficiently and correctly while not abusing many of its members. My IRS whistle-blower action affects not only our local chamber but potentially hundreds of other chambers around the United States and could potentially result in many millions of dollars of penalties and thereby savings for the American public.

Once more I thank you for your continued support. Our chamber must be fixed for the benefit of our community. Please keep sending emails to town council members and local editors and copy me at [SpeakUp@StopChamberAbuse.com](mailto:SpeakUp@StopChamberAbuse.com).

**I will not stop until every rock is turned over, and every abuse brought to light.**

*Skip Hoagland*