

JON S. CORZINE

Governor

OVERNMENT RECORDS COUNCII
101 SOUTH BROAD STREET
PO BOX 819
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0819

JOSEPH V. DORIA, JR. Commissioner

#### FINAL DECISION

## March 25, 2009 Government Records Council Meeting

Thomas Caggiano
Complainant
v.
Borough of Stanhope (Sussex)
Custodian of Record

Complaint Nos. 2006-211, -219 2007-24, -25, -26, -40, -43, -44, -45, -46, -47, -183, -184, -228, -229, -285, -289, 2008-105 (Consolidated)

At the March 25, 2009 public meeting, the Government Records Council ("Council") considered the March 18, 2009 Supplemental Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director and all related documentation submitted by the parties. The Council voted unanimously to adopt the entirety of said findings and recommendations. The Council, therefore, finds that the following cases should be dismissed based on Judge Dana's December 3, 2008 Judgment: Thomas Caggiano v. Borough of Stanhope, GRC Complaint Nos. GRC Complaint Nos. 2006-211, -219; 2007-24, -25, -26, -40, -43, -44, -45, -46, -47,-183, -184, -228, -229, -285, -289, 2008-105.

This is the final administrative determination in this matter. Any further review should be pursued in the Appellate Division of the Superior Court of New Jersey within forty-five (45) days. Information about the appeals process can be obtained from the Appellate Division Clerk's Office, Hughes Justice Complex, 25 W. Market St., PO Box 006, Trenton, NJ 08625-0006. Proper service of submissions pursuant to any appeal is to be made to the Council in care of the Executive Director at the State of New Jersey Government Records Council, 101 South Broad Street, PO Box 819, Trenton, NJ 08625-0819.

Final Decision Rendered by the Government Records Council On The 25<sup>th</sup> Day of March, 2009

Robin Berg Tabakin, Chair Government Records Council



I attest the foregoing is a true and accurate record of the Government Records Council.

Janice L. Kovach Government Records Council

**Decision Distribution Date: March 30, 2009** 

#### STATE OF NEW JERSEY GOVERNMENT RECORDS COUNCIL

# Supplemental Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director March 25, 2009 Council Meeting

Thomas Caggiano<sup>1</sup> Complainant

v.

GRC Complaint Nos. 2006-211, -219; 2007-24, -25, -26, -40, -43, -44, -45, -46, -47,-183, -184, -228, -229, -285, -289,

2008-105 (Consolidated)

Borough of Stanhope (Sussex)<sup>2</sup> Custodian of Records

**Records Relevant to Complaint:** Various

Request Made: Various Dates Response Made: Various Dates

Custodian: Robin Kline

**GRC Complaint Filed:** Various Dates

#### **Background**

#### **December 20, 2007**

Transmittal from the GRC to the Office of Administrative Law ("OAL") of the following cases for an adjudicatory hearing: <u>Thomas Caggiano v. Borough of Stanhope</u> (Sussex), GRC Complaint Nos. 2006-211, -219, 2007-24, -25, -26, -40, -43, -44, -45, -46, -47, -183, -184, -228, -229, -285.

#### **February 4, 2008**

Transmittal from the GRC to the OAL of <u>Thomas Caggiano v. Borough of Stanhope (Sussex)</u>, GRC Complaint No. 2007-289 for an adjudicatory hearing.

#### **December 3, 2008**

Judgment of the Honorable Craig U. Dana, J.M.C., Joint Municipal Court of the Townships of Green, Fredon, Hampton and the Borough of Andover. Judge Dana issues a Judgment of Conviction for harassment and trespass violations prohibiting Thomas Caggiano from having any contact with any present or former employee or official of the Borough of Stanhope except that Mr. Caggiano may mail his tax and utility payments to the Borough and he may call 911 if he has an emergency.

#### March 12, 2009

Letter from the GRC to the Office of Administrative Law. The Executive Director requests the return of the following complaints to the GRC for dismissal: Thomas

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> No legal representation listed on record.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Richard Stein, Esq. (Sparta, NJ).

Thomas Caggiano v. Borough of Stanhope (Sussex), 2006-211, -219; 2007-24, -25, -26, -40, -43, -44, -45, -46, -47, -183, -184, -228, -229, -285, -289, 2008-105 (Consolidated) – Supplemental Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director

<u>Caggiano v. Borough of Stanhope (Sussex)</u>, GRC Complaint Nos. 2006-211, -219, 2007-24, -25, -26, -40, -43, -44, -45, -46, -47, -183, -184, -228, -229, and -285.

#### **Analysis**

No analysis is required.

# **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Executive Director respectfully recommends the Council find that the following cases should be dismissed based on Judge Dana's December 3, 2008 Judgment: Thomas Caggiano v. Borough of Stanhope, GRC Complaint Nos. GRC Complaint Nos. 2006-211, -219; 2007-24, -25, -26, -40, -43, -44, -45, -46, -47,-183, -184, -228, -229, -285, -289, 2008-105.

Prepared By: Karyn Gordon, Esq. In House Counsel

Approved By: Catherine Starghill, Esq. Executive Director

March 18, 2009



# **State of New Jersey**

GOVERNMENT RECORDS COUNCIL

101 SOUTH BROAD STREET PO BOX 819 TRENTON, NJ 08625-0819 Toll Free: 866-850-0511 Fax: 609-633-6337 E-mail: grc@dca.state.nj.us Web Address: www.nj.gov/grc

ACTING COMMISSIONER JOSEPH V. DORIA, JR. COMMISSIONER LUCILLE DAVY ROBIN BERG TABAKIN DAVID FLEISHER CATHERINE STARGHILL Esq., Executive Director

VINCENT P. MALTESE, Chairman

#### **INTERIM ORDER**

#### **December 19, 2007 Government Records Council Meeting**

Thomas Caggiano Complaint No. 2006-211, 2006-219, 2007-24, Complainant 2007-25, 2007-26, 2007-40, 2007-43, 2007-44, v. 2007-45, 2007-46, 2007-47, 2007-183, 2007-184, Borough of Stanhope (Sussex) 2007-228, 2007-229, & 2007-285

Custodian of Record

At the December 19, 2007 public meeting, the Government Records Council ("Council") considered the December 12, 2007 Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director and all related documentation submitted by the parties. The Council voted unanimously to adopt the entirety of said findings and recommendations as amended. The Council, therefore, finds that the request for a stay of the November 28, 2007 Interim Orders referring sixteen (16) complaints to the Office of Administrative Law not be granted since the complaints were referred to the Office of Administrative Law due to a conflict of interest between Complainant and Executive Director Starghill based on the criminal harassment complaint filed and the temporary restraining order obtained for the GRC against Complainant.

Interim Order Rendered by the Government Records Council On The 19<sup>th</sup> Day of December, 2007

Robin Berg Tabakin, Vice Chairman Government Records Council

I attest the foregoing is a true and accurate record of the Government Records Council.

David Fleisher, Secretary Government Records Council

**Decision Distribution Date: December 27, 2007** 



# STATE OF NEW JERSEY GOVERNMENT RECORDS COUNCIL

Regarding Custodian Counsel's Motion for a Stay
Supplemental Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director
December 19, 2007 Council Meeting

Thomas Caggiano<sup>1</sup> Complainant

GRC Complaint Nos. 2006-211, 2006-219, 2007-24, 2007-25, 2007-26, 2007-40, 2007-43, 2007-44, 2007-45, 2007-46, 2007-47, 2007-183, 2007-184, 2007-228, 2007-229 & 2007-285

v.

Borough of Stanhope (Sussex)<sup>2</sup> Custodian of Records

**Records Relevant to Complaint:** Various.

Request Made: Various. Response Made: Various. Custodian: Various.

**GRC Complaint Filed:** Various.

# **Background**

#### **November 28, 2007**

Government Records Council's ("Council") Interim Orders. At its November 28, 2007 public meeting, the Council considered the November 21, 2007 Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director and all related documentation submitted by the parties. The Council voted unanimously to adopt the entirety of said findings and recommendations. The Council, therefore, found in all instances that because of a conflict of interest and at the request of the Complainant, these matters be referred to the Office of Administrative Law ("OAL") for a hearing to resolve the facts and determine whether the Custodian unlawfully denied access to the requested records, and if so, whether the Custodian knowingly and willfully violated the Open Public Records Act ("OPRA") and unreasonable denied access under the totality of the circumstances.

#### November 29, 2007

Council's Interim Orders distributed to the parties.

#### **December 3, 2007**

Council's Interim Orders and supporting complaint file documents transmitted to the OAL.

# **December 6, 2007**

Custodian's Request for Stay of the Council's Interim Orders. The Custodian's Counsel asserts that the GRC does not understand the ramification of its decision to send

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> No legal representative listed in the file.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Represented by Richard Stein of Laddey, Clark & Ryan, LLP (Sparta, NJ).

all sixteen (16) Denial of Access Complaints to the OAL. Specifically, the Custodian's Counsel states that by entering the orders it has (referring the complaints to the OAL due to a conflict of interest between Complainant and Executive Director Starghill based on the criminal harassment complaint filed and the temporary restraining order obtained for the GRC against Complainant), the GRC has caved into the harassment and intimidation of the Complainant and that Complainant should not be allowed to benefit by his own behavior but instead should be punished criminally for this behavior.

The Custodian's Counsel also states that by referring the sixteen (16) complaints to the OAL, the Borough of Stanhope will have to engage in the full administrative hearing procedure on each of the complaints with the strong likelihood that the Administrative Law Judge will recommend to the GRC that such complaints are frivolous and made in bad faith solely for the purpose of harassment which the GRC will still have to rule on by accepting the decision of the Administrative Law Judge.

Additionally, the Custodian's Counsel states that the public interest and the injury to the public was not considered by the GRC because the Borough of Stanhope must be represented by legal counsel in hearings before OAL requiring pretrial preparation, as well as trips to the OAL in Newark at an estimated cost of \$3,000 per complaint or over \$50,000 versus no legal counsel required before the GRC.

Further, the Custodian's Counsel states that there is no harm to any party by the GRC continuing to process the complaints in the usual administrative manner since the GRC members and staff are now protected by a restraining order and should be able to function normally in the administrative determination of these matters. The Custodian's Counsel asserts that the GRC should not blithely abrogate its duties under OPRA because of a harassment complaint.

Lastly, the Custodian's Counsel asserts that the Complainant will continue to file Denial of Access Complaints with the GRC which the GRC will refer to the OAL, thus resulting in enormous legal expenses to the Borough of Stanhope. The Custodian's Counsel states that the Borough of Stanhope has decided to seek judicial relief in Superior Court against the Complainant and will file a Complaint with an Order to Show Cause within the next ten (10) days. Therefore, the Custodian requests a stay of all proceedings and schedule these matters for a reconsideration pending the Borough's Superior Court action against the Complainant.

#### **Analysis**

Whether the GRC should grant a stay of the November 28, 2007 Interim Orders referring sixteen (16) complaints to the Office of Administrative Law?

The Custodian requests a stay of the November 28, 2007 Interim Orders of the Government Records Council and asserts the following justification for such stay:

#### Likelihood of Success on the Merits

The Custodian's Counsel states that the Borough of Stanhope has decided to seek judicial relief in Superior Court of New Jersey against the Complainant and will file a Complaint with an Order to Show Cause within the next ten (10) days. The Custodian's Counsel does not make any assertions regarding the likelihood of success on the merits of this action before Superior Court.

# Danger of Irreparable Harm

The Custodian's Counsel asserts that the irreparable harm from the GRC not granting a stay of the referral of the sixteen (16) complaints to the OAL is that the Borough of Stanhope must be represented by legal counsel in hearings before OAL requiring pretrial preparation, as well as trips to the OAL in Newark at an estimated cost of \$3,000 per complaint or over \$50,000 versus no legal counsel required before the GRC.

#### Potential Chilling Effect

The Custodian's Counsel further asserts that the Complainant will continue to file Denial of Access Complaints with the GRC which the GRC will refer to the OAL, thus resulting in enormous legal expenses to the Borough of Stanhope. Additionally, the Custodian's Counsel asserts that by entering the orders it has (referring the complaints to the OAL due to a conflict of interest between Complainant and Executive Director Starghill based on the criminal harassment complaint filed and the temporary restraining order obtained for the GRC against Complainant), the GRC has caved into the harassment and intimidation of the Complainant and that Complainant should not be allowed to benefit by his own behavior but instead should be punished criminally for this behavior.

The arguments made by the Custodian's Counsel are not enough to overcome the harm that may be done by the Executive Director and the entire GRC staff and members continuing with the agency adjudication of complaints filed by a Complainant against whom the Executive Director has a filed a criminal harassment complaint and obtained an agency temporary restraining order. These facts present an obvious perception of a conflict of interest which will only minimally be affected by the GRC's acceptance of the initial decisions rendered by an Administrative Law Judge hearing these complaints at OAL.

Additionally, the Complainant specifically requested that all his open complaints be forwarded to the OAL for adjudication due to the perceived conflict of interest. This request alone and acknowledgement by the Complainant of a conflict of interest is, in and of itself, enough to justify the GRC's referral of these matters to the OAL. The GRC's adjudication of these complaints may be viewed as an impingement upon the Complainant's due process right. Also, the Custodian's Counsel should note that the vast majority of litigates before the OAL are pro se. Therefore, while the Borough's anticipated legal expense to defend the Custodian at the OAL may be extensive, it is not a requirement of the proceedings. Lastly, the harassing behavior of the Complainant toward GRC staff tips the balancing scales in the decision to refer these complaints to the OAL. Contrary to the Custodian's Counsel argument that the GRC should not allow the

Complainant to benefit from his own harassing behavior toward GRC Staff, the GRC does not view referring these complaints as a "benefit" to the Complainant but rather an executive branch administrative procedure allowed per the provisions of the Administrative Procedures Act, N.J.S.A. 52:14B-1 et seq.

For these reasons mentioned above, the Custodian's request for a stay should not be granted.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Executive Director respectfully recommends the Council find that the request for a stay of the November 28, 2007 Interim Orders referring sixteen (16) complaints to the Office of Administrative Law not be granted since the complaints were referred to the Office of Administrative Law due to a conflict of interest between Complainant and Executive Director Starghill based on the criminal harassment complaint filed and the temporary restraining order obtained for the GRC against Complainant.

Approved By:

Catherine Starghill, Esq. Executive Director

December 18, 2007



# **State of New Jersey**

GOVERNMENT RECORDS COUNCIL

101 SOUTH BROAD STREET PO BOX 819 TRENTON, NJ 08625-0819 Toll Free: 866-850-0511 Fax: 609-633-6337 E-mail: grc@dca.state.nj.us Web Address: www.nj.gov/grc

COMMISSIONER LUCILLE DAVY
ROBIN BERG TABAKIN
DAVID FLEISHER
CATHERINE STARGHILL Esq., Executive Director

VINCENT P. MALTESE, Chairman

ACTING COMMISSIONER JOSEPH V. DORIA, JR.

### **INTERIM ORDER**

#### November 28, 2007 Government Records Council Meeting

Thomas Caggiano
Complainant
v.
Borough of Stanhope (Sussex)
Custodian of Record

Complaint No. 2007-228

At the November 28, 2007 public meeting, the Government Records Council ("Council") considered the November 21, 2007 Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director and all related documentation submitted by the parties. The Council voted unanimously to adopt the entirety of said findings and recommendations. The Council, therefore, finds that because of a conflict of interest and at the request of the Complainant, this matter be referred to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing to resolve the facts and determine whether the custodian unlawfully denied access to the requested records, and if so, whether the denial was knowing and willful in violation of OPRA and unreasonable under the totality of the circumstances.

Interim Order Rendered by the Government Records Council On The 28<sup>th</sup> Day of November, 2007

Vincent P. Maltese, Chairman Government Records Council

I attest the foregoing is a true and accurate record of the Government Records Council.

Government Records Council



**Decision Distribution Date: November 29, 2007** 

# STATE OF NEW JERSEY GOVERNMENT RECORDS COUNCIL

# Findings and Recommendations of the Executive Director November 28, 2007 Council Meeting

Thomas Caggiano<sup>1</sup> Complainant

GRC Complaint No. 2007-228

v.

Borough of Stanhope (Sussex)<sup>2</sup> Custodian of Records

Records Relevant to Complaint: Please see Complainant's seven-page, multi-part

handwritten OPRA request, attached hereto as Exhibit "A."<sup>3</sup>

Request Made: August 9, 2007

**Response Made:** 

**Custodian:** Robin R. Kline, Municipal Clerk **GRC Complaint Filed:** October 2, 2007

#### **Background**

Because of a conflict of interest,<sup>4</sup> and at the request of the Complainant, this matter should be referred to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing to resolve the facts of this case and any possible violations of OPRA arising therefrom.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Executive Director respectfully recommends the Council find that because of a conflict of interest and at the request of the Complainant, this matter be referred to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing to resolve the facts and determine whether the custodian unlawfully denied access to the requested records, and if so, whether the denial was knowing and willful in violation of OPRA and unreasonable under the totality of the circumstances.

#### Prepared By:

<sup>1</sup> No legal representation listed on record.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> No legal representation listed on record.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Complainant states in his Denial of Access Complaint that this is an eight-page request. However, only seven pages were attached to the original OPRA request which the Complainant included with his Denial of Access Complaint.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> On or about October 21, 2007, the Executive Director of the GRC, Catherine Starghill, filed a criminal harassment complaint against the Complainant in Mercer County Municipal Court. On or about October 29, 2007, the Government Records Council obtained a temporary civil restraining order against the Complainant in the Superior Court of New Jersey, Chancery Division.

Karyn Gordon, Esq. In House Counsel

Approved By:

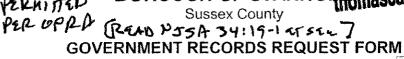
Catherine Starghill, Esq. Executive Director

November 21, 2007



# いた: State of New Jersey

# REDACTIONS ARE PERMITTED BOROUGH OF STANHORFOMASCAGGIANO.COM Sussex County





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6) Provide copy of Invoices By the MUNICIPAL ENCINERRY AND COPY OF MUNICIPAL ENLIVEER'S CONTRACT FOR CLAIMS SUBMITTED TO ENF DEN. Co. LLE ESCROW FECT For Checks 1187 on 4/13/2000, 1058 on 7/30/2001, 1096 on 5/31/2002, 1511 on 11/30/2002, 1528 m 10/31/2002, 1551 on 6/30/2004 AND 1554 m 8/31/2004 By John City Ja. AssociASS. INCLUDE GRY OF FINANCE CHMMITTER Apprived for EARLY CLAIN, CUPY OF CONTINUET FOR Professional Engineering Severises that WAS AWMORD For John Gt Je ASSOCIATED FOR EACH YEAR FOR EACH CLAIM NOTED ABOUR AND GOTY OF PERUIPED IVENS PAPER APNOUNCEMENT FOR CONTINUET FOR JOHN Cilo Jr. AssociATES For EACH YEAR Par the LOCAL Public CONTRACTS LAW HAT John Cilo Ja AssociATES WAS PAID FROM THE BURNISH of STANHPE ESCROW ACCOUNT.

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# OPRA ED THOMMS CAGGIAN

(17) Council, Gov Bopy Mamben Georg Gratture AND A VERY DISTRESSED MUNICIPAL CLANC Rubin KLINE AS THE Borrough of Strumpe's original Muricipal Charle was Bouns GULTY BY the GRE OF VIOLATING MY OPRA Rights is its Friedry of Grezeoboz il the GAC issued AN INTERIN ORDER TO PWOLKE DOCUMENTS INS DAYS & DID 195T. THE TOWN ADMINISTRAM ON Jul 25, 2007 the GAC AFTER AFTER SEVEN MONTH INTENSIVE REVIEW THOUGH the DISTRESSED OPRA Custodini RATHER THEN CALLING ANY HEARING ATTHE GRE on the BAC DISCUSSION the issue of Non-RESPONSE with the MAYOR DIAMA KUNCKEN W GON BODY FOUND A REVIEW OF FACTS WAS NEEDED AND TRANSMITTED A 16 EXHIBIT CASE to the Office of Administrative Law. I was never in Forman of fly TOWN ADMINISTATOR'S RESIGNATION AS SHE WAS the RESPORDENT IN MY CHESE AGMINST STANINGE. BY the GAC. Mr. GRAIMM REFUSED to even tell me it she was fired or Resigned what date was ANY MENTING held or what Gov Officions ATTED ATTENDED THE MTG. THIS MISO DIRECTLY IMPACTS
THE CASE ASAINST ME BY STANHAR AS SGT CHAMES Eweigh wrote & FALSE 911 Report And the 48

TOUR ADMINISTRATION MUST REVIEW MY COMPLANT AGAINST BOTH THE Chief of Police Steven Pittigen #1 Sor Enrigh As the Chief of Police Rafuson to neview A dranscript of Hu 911 Care or Listen to m mp3 Newno in I make AT laparang Police St AS the LT REFUSED/DENIAD MY WALID UPRA REQ TO OBTONU A FR WORD FILE in transcipt of the short 311 Msg to prive the SGT 911 Report un- forse in to trunk with the Deveshing of 3 oct De who talked & SOT Zweigh As fames came into their home from the ADIACAL Duputies on Bleck 10903 6ts 13+15 which was developED ILLECARLY BY ENF Davalogment & LCC (18) I request the followns:

pgr7

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(17.1 ) Copy of Stanking Burn Engy Approvers Soil

Erussing Sevinant Control Plans (MAPS)

HART AND ALSO CENTIFIED BY Susses County

Soil Conservation District for Exp's Burck 10902 Luts 10+12

AND BURCK 10903 Lotis or +14

17.2 A copy of the JAN chuch PAin to John Cilo In AssociATES for work performed by the Finn's employee Scarlett Doyle, for professional planning Services 14 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 AND 2006 with disbursed france funda & John Cito In HSSOCIATES in JAN SUVICER lack year only Allow MDD ITHURE PAYMENTS MAY HAVE BEEN MADE IN FOLLOWING Months, A copy of the claimby John Gto Ju Associates putermed contracted service as as professional planner to the Borough ot Star hope A copy of the written contrabt Signed by John Cilo Jr ASSOCIATES NITH A Borongh of Stanhape of Ficial & A copy of the required NEWSPaper published skigal putice in the official newspaper" of the Award DATA, NATURE of SERVICE, total Amount of Contract of professioning planning cost / In that was negotiated Par the Local Public Contracts Low of A copy of Each year's rewell of visiotiation/companison cost of ALAT ALTRIMIOS raturations it NOT DONE IN 3 YRS.