

Rhiannon Fionn-Bowman

From: Rhiannon Fionn-Bowman <rhi@thewordtrade.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 27, 2011 11:29 PM
To: 'adulin@charlottenc.gov'
Cc: Mark Kemp (mark.kemp@creativeloafing.com)
Subject: Opportunity to respond: Comments from Harry Taylor and Occupy Charlotte
Attachments: Benefit Bfast 012812.pdf

Importance: High

Councilman Dulin,

As you know, I've tried several times to reach you for comment regarding some social media posts you made today regarding Occupy Charlotte on Facebook and Twitter. My editors at Creative Loafing, who brought your comments to my attention, are going forward with a story that will be published online tomorrow. We would like to give you one last chance to comment before we publish our story.

Know that I've also reached out to everyone on the city council, Harry Taylor and Occupy Charlotte for comment.

My first question: Why did you choose to visit and take photos during a winter rain storm versus on a less-cold and rainy day, and the night before at 10 p.m.? I asked several Occupiers today where they were at the times you visited last night and today. They said they were in their tents trying to stay warm or that they were sleeping. It is my understanding, from the Occupiers, that some of them go home during bad weather events. Did you happen to ask any of them about the weather, or where their fellow Occupiers were at? (I was told you repeatedly asked them how many Occupiers there are – is that accurate?)

I confirmed with Jess Belue, an Occupier who was at camp when you came by today, that you did, in fact, visit the camp. There was some confusion earlier in the day over whether or not you actually did visit the camp, so I want to clarify: Did you visit the camp yourself and take the photos you posted on Facebook and Twitter, or did you send someone in your stead? My understanding is that you visited the camp yourself, but I want to be certain since I wasn't there. If you did visit in person, do you recall meeting Ms. Belue?

Ms. Belue said you told the Occupiers you met Tuesday that you support their right to protest, but not to camp. She also said that you said, "You guys need to get off my lawn," and that you considered (what they call) the "comfort station" to be a "structure" because the campers have put wooden pallets on the ground to protect their belongings and food from weather events, such as the one the city experienced today. Additionally, she said, "It was pouring down, that's why we were in there, trying to stay warm and dry." Did you say, "You guys need to get off my lawn"? And, by "my" are you referring to the property being owned by the city and your role as a city representative, or are you referring to your role as a citizen and tax payer? Ms. Belue also said that you said you were on your way to a funeral "for someone who fought for your rights to protest." Whose funeral did you attend, Councilman? How did they fight for Americans' right to protest? ((Also, my sincere sympathies.))

Do Ms. Belue's comments ring true to you?

On Twitter, at approximately 9:45 a.m. today, you stated what you thought you'd find at Occupy Charlotte – "four humans and 20 tents." How many people did you meet during your visit? How many tents did you count? I understand, from a comment you made on Facebook, that you also visited Monday night around 10 p.m. – was that your first visit to camp? Will you visit again? While at camp, did you inventory the tents to find out which were occupied and which were not? Additionally, are you aware that many Occupiers have jobs or attend school and thus leave camp for those reasons? Are you also aware that some of the Occupiers, on and off, are, in fact, homeless and are and were welcomed

at camp? The only campers who were not welcomed were those who caused trouble of some sort, so the Occupiers and their attorneys sought restraining orders, they tell me, in the interest of the entire camp's safety.

In one of your Facebook photographs, you captured an image of a few bags of trash, a composting bucket and a recycling bin, etc. Were you aware that the Occupiers are composting and recycling? Did you find any trash on the ground? Are you aware that the Occupiers have someone pick up their trash, compostable materials and recyclables at regular intervals – daily, last I checked?

Please feel free to express any additional thoughts you have on the camp, the people, etc.

In one of your Facebook comments, you mention that you asked your fellow city council members “what they would do if the KKK showed up and wanted to camp at Old City Hall for infinity.” Which city council members did you post that question to? What was their reaction? And, why did you ask them about the KKK instead of another organization? I’m awaiting comments from most of the council, though the members I did speak with said you haven’t contact them regarding anything to do with the KKK or Occupy Charlotte recently, though one admitted she hasn’t checked her e-mail in a few days and that she may have, therefore, missed a message from you.

When I spoke to Mr. Taylor he said, “I am the spokesman he talked about, I’m positive.” And, “Andy is not an enemy of the Occupy movement, but he’s going to vote against them staying, period.” He also said that he wasn’t speaking to you as a spokesman for Occupy Charlotte, rather that he was trying to explain why he supports the Occupiers. He also intimated that you don’t understand why they’re camping, that you’d prefer for them to go home with the sun and that you’d even offered to set up chairs for them should they decide to meet in the same space for meetings without camping. He said your meeting, which he said was approximately ten days ago, was “a really friendly meeting.” He said your comments via social media today are similar to the comments you made to him at your meeting. Did you ask Mr. Taylor the same KKK-related question that you asked your fellow council members?

Do Mr. Taylor’s comments accurately reflect your memories of your meeting with him? Was he, in fact, the spokesman you refer to in your comments? If so, why not name him in your posts?

It is my understanding -- from your comments before the council in November, from Harry’s recollection of your conversation, from your social media posts and from the Occupiers -- that you’re not against the Occupy movement, but that you would prefer for them to stop camping on city property and go home when the sun sets. Is that an accurate assessment?

The city council is expected to discuss a bundle of ordinances regarding the DNC later this month. Is it your feeling that the council will vote to ban camping? Additionally, is it your understanding that a vote to ban camping at the DNC will also ban camping by Occupy Charlotte at Old City Hall? When do you expect that vote to take place? Will the matter be sent to committee before a vote? Will there be a public hearing on the matter?

Last question, are you aware that the Occupiers are hosting a benefit breakfast later this month where they intend to further outline their purpose? I’ve attached a handout one of their attorneys gave me today for your review. Will you attend?

Thank you in advance for taking the time out of your busy schedule to respond to these questions. Call with your answers, if you prefer. My number is below and in your voicemail messages.

Best regards,

Rhiannon Fionn-Bowman

