

Lobbyist who facilitated Apple's deal in Reno has state contract

By David McGrath Schwartz, Las Vegas Sun

When Apple needed help negotiating the tax breaks it sought as a condition to build a \$1 billion data center in Northern Nevada, the company turned to Greg Ferraro, a veteran Carson City lobbyist and top adviser to Gov. Brian Sandoval.

But Ferraro not only has a close relationship with the governor. He also has a \$200-an-hour public relations contract with the Governor's Office of Economic Development, the agency with which Apple company officials would be negotiating.

In yet another example of the insular world of Nevada politics, Ferraro's company was, in essence, collecting paychecks from negotiators sitting on opposite sides of the table.

Although the client roster for Ferraro's company includes the state and Apple, he said he personally represented only Apple in the dealings that netted the company \$89 million in tax breaks.

"There's no way I saw, or was worried about, a conflict in that intersection," he said.

Ferraro played a key role in the Apple deal, putting together meetings between company representatives and state and local officials. He sat in on some of the meetings, some of which were held in his Reno office.

Steve Hill, director of the Governor's Office of Economic Development, said Ferraro represented only Apple, not the state, in the deal that lured the iconic technology company to

Nevada.

A state board approved a \$200-an-hour contract with the Ferraro Group for public relations and communications in 2009, before Sandoval was elected governor. The contract was extended in 2011 for another two years. The almost four-year contract, in total, is capped at \$180,000.

The Ferraro Group contract with the state calls for it to help the state develop its message for the public. The group has sent out press releases. Monthly invoices were not immediately available.

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