

Donation to education group tainted by link to South Lake Tahoe bribery, drug case

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By Kathryn Reed

The Lake Tahoe Educational Foundation appears to be helping South Lake Tahoe City Councilwoman Angela Swanson cover up a donation from Gino DiMatteo.



Nancy Rollston, president of the nonprofit foundation, Swanson and DiMatteo met this summer at least once to discuss a donation by DiMatteo to the group.

At that time DiMatteo operated the medical marijuana collective called City of Angels II. It was also known that the U.S. Attorney General's Office was cracking down on collectives in California. Medical marijuana dispensaries at various times have been a closed session item on City Council agendas, so Swanson has privileged information and more knowledge than the average citizen in South Lake Tahoe about that segment of the community.

It was well-known that the dispensaries were all under the radar of law enforcement for potential illegal drug activity. Why an education group that helps students in Lake Tahoe Unified School District, that has an FBI agent on its board, would accept his money is not known because their president is withholding information from the media.

And according to Chris Campion, the FBI agent who is on the board and is past president of the foundation, Rollston is the spokesperson for the group.

“The bottom line right now is we are not going to be talking about it. If that changes in the next few days, we will get back in contact with you,” Campion told *Lake Tahoe News*.

DiMatteo is now behind bars in Placerville on charges of bribing a public official (Swanson), possession of marijuana for sale, possession of a controlled substance and possession of ammunition.

A bail hearing the afternoon of Sept. 7 could determine if he will be released as his case goes through the court system.

Swanson has not been charged with any crime, but her name has been used in documents by the El Dorado County District Attorney’s Office, the lead agency in the case, stating she is the one who DiMatteo allegedly bribed.

Lake Tahoe News has been told by sources that Swanson had secured one or two \$5,000 donations from DiMatteo for the Ed Foundation. Swanson is on the Ed Foundation’s board.

KRNV-TV in Reno reports having a letter from Ed Foundation President Rollston thanking DiMatteo for his donation of \$1,128, with a handwritten addendum saying, “Your donation was extremely generous and is greatly appreciated.”

Other officers on the Ed Foundation board are Pradip Patel-vice president, Jerry Bindel-treasurer (he could not be reached at his office after 5pm Sept. 6), Debra McHugh-secretary, and Campion-past president.

The other board members are Tyler Cannon, Greg Bergner, Paige Cefalu, Jana DiGrande, Bill Kingman, Jen David, Lee Anne Stigers-Genasci, Christina Proctor, Joe Marzocco, Brain Hogan, Coleen Shade, Diane Rosner, Julie Lucksinger, Cookie Rork, and

Tom Davis.

Campion said he would not comment on whether the donation from DiMatteo raised red flags because who made the donation or how it was handled.

City Councilman Davis said, "I have not been active in the Ed Foundation for some time. I have no knowledge of [any] donation whatsoever. Period."

Rollston said, "I have no response or comment to any of your questions."

There is question whether information about the foundation's donors are public record.

Swanson said at this time she is not commenting further about anything related to the case.

Even if all of the money DiMatteo gave the Ed Foundation ended up in the appropriate bank account, Swanson had a duty to report the transaction to the California Fair Political Practices Commission. She also had an obligation to report it to the City Council to disclose an entity she was involved with was benefiting from someone who the city was doing business with. Neither of these things occurred.

It is not known if she consulted City Attorney Patrick Enright.

Lake Tahoe News asked Enright if he gave Swanson any advice about anything involving the case. He said, "I can't comment at this time while the investigation is going on."

However, *Lake Tahoe News* has learned Enright is the one who recommended Swanson hire the attorney she has retained out of Sacramento.

