

Is Morgan in conflict of interest

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Recently a local news source featured an editorial titled "O'Connor shouldn't be Pushing Unions for Deputies."

In addressing this article, and Commissioner Morgan's comments, I want to make it very clear that I previously consulted the county attorney prior to anyone opening their dogmatic mouths, and received a written opinion from him relating to this matter, and as I have previously stated there is no conflict of interest, none whatsoever, nor is there a perception thereof unless someone manufactures it.

Commissioner Morgan was quoted: "It's a perception. Why is this person advocating for a cause? Does the person directly benefit as a result?"

I am glad he brought this up; because it brings highlight to many ventures that we seek as elected officials. The same perception could be had since Commissioner Morgan is a Defense Contractor, and pushed for \$7,000,000.00 to be set aside for BRAC Funding. It's could seem obvious that he stands to benefit from that funding. It being placed there to stay off a BRAC, since his company profits from many contracts at the Navy Base and the same could be applied to his keen interest in JLUS or AQUIZ, applied the same way, but in fact there are no conflicts. A good friend of mine once told me you should worry about your own inventory before you start looking at other persons. I think that can be applied in this situation.

I would like to thank Commissioner Guy, Commissioner Jarboe, and Commissioner Hewitt for their comments both in the paper and in dealing with this issue. They assessed the situation factually, and saw it for exactly what it was. Their comments did not play into the false hype or create a fear in the public by giving vague or misleading quotes, and I hope this statement answers Commissioner Morgan's questions about perception and why I am advocating for our Men and Women in blue.

Ultimately, the biggest difference between the ridiculous stance of that "Opinion" piece and Commissioner Morgan is fact that during the campaign, I made it known I would support the efforts of FOP7 in obtaining a collective bargaining agreement. The panel of members had a series of questions that they asked during our interview last year. They represent the membership and in order to have those questions brought forward some, sort of agreement to those questions must have occurred; whether or not it was an official vote or an informal poll that happened. Furthermore, it should be known that this "demon" Collective Bargaining? Charles County Sheriff's Office has it, Prince George's County Police Department, Howard County, Harford County, Montgomery County ALL have Collective Bargaining just to name a few.

So what does this have to do with our Sheriff's Office? We need to be able to offer competitive benefits to prospective new employees, and remain relevant as an employer. As of right now The Sheriff's Office isn't bringing the same opportunities to the table for prospective employees, nor can they promote employee longevity and retention for current deputies with the tools that they have at hand. So far the inability to remain relevant and competitive has cost the taxpayers of this county roughly 8.75 Million Dollars in turnover in two years, based on what it costs to train and equip a deputy based on my simple math. That's \$181,000.00 per deputy x how many have left in the first few years of employment.

So why would I not support something that can save that amount of money, and or drastically reduce it? I can guarantee it's not philosophical but factual.

Commissioner Morgan was complaining that no official vote had occurred. The FOP held a current vote. I will also add that this formal vote had an overwhelming majority of the members of FOP 7 support collective bargaining moving forward.

I gave our Deputies my word that I would support them in their efforts regardless of an endorsement during that interview. I am a man of my word and I am living up to it.

To the point of whoever wrote the "Opinion" piece from the Enterprise that my family would "financially benefit" from such collective bargaining agreement, you are somewhat correct, but somewhat only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades. Brass Tacks... This agreement is about a collective, a group, and organization that are bigger than just one person. So it is not based on one person having the possibility of receiving a benefit.

As we move forward if we were to apply this "logic" of the few who believe (based on no factual or legal basis) that this is a conflict because I or my family may benefit, then we as County Commissioners then cannot reduce the property tax, as it reduces our family's property taxes as well, or we cannot remove the energy tax because when we go get gas at the pump we would financially benefit, or furthermore our electric and propane bills would be less thereby us financially gaining. In fact, if this ridiculous spin was applied, no commissioner could sign the budget because they may financially gain from any decision within. It is absolutely absurd and unfounded.

In fact, the only reason this is being made an issue is because of the title, Collective Bargaining. In a time when our law enforcement is under fire, treated poorly by the majority of people they deal with, and in some parts hated, someone is fighting for them and not giving into the political correctness that our society is overcome with, but that's what true leaders do.

I see that the true reason people are so against this, is because of pure ignorant fear. Evidence backing this reason is the fact that not one peep was heard when we implemented step increases, purchased new vehicles, and ordered a compensation study for the entire Sheriff's Office organization, as well as County Employees.

What I suggest to those that wish to formulate an opinion based on media spin or ill spoken words of a misguided politico is read up and educate yourself on the Ethics Ordinance and how it is truly applied. We should be operating on facts and legal precedent vs. media dogma, propaganda, and few ill spoken words of a court jester.

We have an affirmative vote by the Fraternal Order of Police, A Sheriff who is supportive, 4 Commissioners that are supportive, and the families of the deputies as well. I am sure there is citizen support for our men and women in blue as well.

I will continue to support the men and women of FOP 7. I have done my part by bringing it to the table as I promised. It is now up to them to work with the legislative body and the Sheriff to get an agreeable piece of legislation, and eventually passed in Annapolis.

I hope this letter clears up any statements made by others and why I am supportive of our Men and Women in blue.

I encourage the members of FOP #7 to continue the push for their legislation.

Commissioner John E O'Connor