

Stephen Buoniconti, Esq.
City Solicitor
City of Springfield
Law Department
36 Court Street, Room 210
Springfield, MA 01103
Office (413) 787-6085
sbuoniconti@springfieldcityhall.com



The City of Springfield
Massachusetts

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City Council
36 Court Street
Springfield, MA, 01103

Dear City Councilors:

I received an email on February 7, 2026 from a City Councilor requesting a review of all the interactions and all business transactions conducted between the JETS Property Development LLC ("JETS"), Mr. Jelani Bland and Councilor President Tracy Whitfield in their respective roles with JETS and the City of Springfield. Please find the attached legal memorandum from the Law Department. While the memorandum addresses Council President Whitfield's meetings and email correspondence with various City departments and participation at two public auctions conducted by the City, the memorandum should not be treated as an exhaustive review based on the sizeable scope of the request. Nevertheless, the Law Department reports the following information.

VIOLATIONS WITH HOUSING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, AND TREASURER DEPARTMENTS

The Law Department received an email in early 2025 from Tina Quagliato-Sullivan, Deputy Development Officer, with a request for legal guidance on a potential violation of the conflict of interest law. Councilor Whitfield had requested a meeting between City officials, herself and Mr. Jelani Bland to discuss placing certain City owned parcels that JETS identified up for auction. Councilor Whitfield alluded to having a financial interest in property acquisition but did not provide specifics. City officials limited the discussion to the standard process of selling City owned property through the request for proposal (RFP) process.

Members of JETS then contacted the Treasurer's Office and provided a list of City owned property that they were interested in acquiring. Councilor Whitfield followed up by requesting more information on the RFP process and other City owned parcels. In April 2025, Councilor Whitfield scheduled and conducted a City Council subcommittee meeting to discuss the City's procurement and RFP process.

A previous meeting had occurred a few years prior with the City's Department of Housing, Councilor Whitfield and JETS. Councilor Whitfield requested a meeting and engaged with City officials on the same subject matter, a request by JETS to have the City put out to RFP or up for auction properties that JETS expressed an interest in acquiring.

Councilor Whitfield did not clearly inform the City of her financial interests at any time during the interactions or her financial interest in JETS, nor she did file any disclosures of a conflict of interest.

Councilor Whitfield violated MGL c. 268A section 23(b)(3) by improperly influencing various City Departments and seeking favoritism for her personal financial gain.

Councilor Whitfield violated MGL c. 268A section 17(c) by acting as an agent for JETS on a financial matter where the City is a party.

Councilor Whitfield violated MGL c. 268A section 19 by participating on City matters where her immediate family members (Mr. Jelani Bland is her son) had a financial interest.

Councilor Whitfield violated MGL c. 268A section 20 by having a financial interest in contract JETS and encouraging the City to dispose of properties upon their request.

Councilor Whitfield violated the City Charter section 27 by attempting to create a financial contract with the City and JETS where she had a direct financial interest at stake.

Councilor Whitfield did not disclose to the City the extent of her financial relationship with JETS or her immediate family connection to another director of JETS, Jelani Bland as her son.

VIOLATIONS WITH DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Beginning in 2024, Councilor Whitfield started directly engaging with staff in the Department of Public Works on the development of 22 Wistaria Street and the process to discontinue the City's ownership of the parcel at the center of debate at the last City Council meeting, Wallace Street. From August 26, 2024 until January 22, 2026, Councilor Whitfield emailed staff at Planning and the DPW on at least 11 different dates, sometimes multiple emails in a day. Councilor Whitfield emailed the department heads on the process for discontinuance of the section of Wallace Street that abutted the JETS owned parcel of 22 Wistaria Street. Councilor Whitfield's emails also included complaints on the cost and length of the process, questions on why a two family cannot be built on the discontinued land and a demand for a meeting.

Councilor Whitfield violated all the above-enumerated sections of MGL c. 268A and the City Charter for the same reasons as listed above, directly engaging with the City to gain a financial interest and without ever disclosing that interest.

The Law Department was contacted by the DPW Director approximately in late July 2025 who raised concerns of Councilor Whitfield placing undue influence on his department to advance the Wallace Street discontinuance.

Based on the concerns raised by multiple department heads, the Law Department issued a conflict of interest memorandum to all members of the City Council in late September to once again educate and remind the Councilor of the conflict of interest laws. That same memo was distributed again to the City Council after the January 2026 swearing in ceremonies.

VIOLATION WITH OLD HILL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

A payment dispute arose between the Old Hill Neighborhood Association and Mr. Desi Jackson, who reported that he was owed \$2,000 in payment for services rendered for the Association. The City was involved in the issue as grant monies were awarded to the Association by the City and the City worked

with Associations to pay invoices with the grant monies. Councilor Whitfield interceded on behalf of Mr. Jackson and insisted on the City to make payment for his services. The City reminded Councilor Whitfield that the Association is obligated to submit an invoice before payment can be made. Councilor Whitfield also directly engaged with the Vice President and Treasurer of the Association and informed the VP/Treasurer that she will ask the City Auditor and other City departments to look into the Association's finances. The VP/Treasurer sent an email to the City raising a concern and an objection to the Councilor using her position of authority to influence the process.

Councilor Whitfield violated MGL c. 268A section 23(b)(3) by improperly influencing various City Departments and placing pressure on the City staff to take a certain action. Councilor Whitfield unduly influenced the process by leveraging a threat of an audit to generate payment to Mr. Jackson.

AUCTIONS

Councilor Whitfield participated in two auctions conducted by the City. In 2021, Councilor Whitfield and JETS were the winning bidder on a parcel. The parcel was then conveyed to Councilor Whitfield's mother who developed the property. In February 2026, Councilor Whitfield attended and participated in the City auction. JETS was the winning bidder on 2 parcels. Councilor Whitfield did not disclose her financial interest in JETS at the time of the auction.

Councilor Whitfield violated MGL c. 268A section 17(c) by either acting independently or as an agent for JETS on a financial matter where the City is a party.

Councilor Whitfield violated the City Charter section 27 by attempting to create a financial contract with the City and JETS where she had a direct financial interest at stake.

LEGAL CONCLUSION

The Law Department concludes that Council President Whitfield violated various sections of the conflict of interest law (MGL c. 268A) over and over again throughout the course of the last year and years prior. Councilor Whitfield was prohibited from directly engaging with City staff on matters where she had a financial interest. Yet she directly engaged with City officials on behalf of JETS to seek certain outcomes where she would personally profit and never disclosed her interest to City officials or the public.

In addition, Councilor Whitfield's engagement with the City on behalf of Mr. Desi Jackson reeks of improper and undue influence, especially by threatening to use City departments to audit the Association.

The Law Department will forward this memorandum and all the supporting documentation to the State Ethics Commission.



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