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## Thursday, October 15: The Plot Thickens!

**Chamber's Branham admits coordinating funds distribution; Legislators received identical checks!**

### WHY DID BOOST CHOOSE OTHER WEBSITES TO OPEN DEBATE?

The question has been posed and statements have been made suggesting that the authors of the original story (click here) is "another nameless, faceless accuser." Well, BOOST is not nameless or faceless - but the public deserves to know why the story broke at DiscoverMyrtleBeach.com (DMB) and iBiker.org. Both websites have informed BOOST that no representative from the MBACC has asked that the story be taken down. BOOST choose DMB, iBiker and select others for three reason:

- *Until now, the BOOST website has had very little traffic;*
- *The Sun News has failed to report virtually every single story and/or press release BOOST has sent to them, including all stories about BOOST sponsored and paid-for Grand Strand Freedom Festival in September;*
- *DiscoverMyrtleBeach.com is among the most visited websites about the Grand Strand - with more than 2 million visitors a year. IBiker.org is among the popular websites among those interested in all the activities that folks do when enjoying their motorcycles. It is comprehensive, accurate and easy to navigate.*

As an example, DiscoverMyrtleBeach.com received considerable praise on the opening of the new Grand Strand Chamber of Commerce. It's president, Mark McBride, mentioned Discover Myrtle Beach at the press conference and the amount of traffic it receives, over 2,000,000 total visitors per year, and criticized the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce for the way it handles its advertising compared to DMB.com.

Neither Discover Myrtle Beach, not iBiker nor BOOST has accused the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce of any wrong doing and specifically and clearly stated that they did not write the article and expect people to draw their own conclusions.

### THE PLOT THICKENS: WHO ELSE GOT THE MONEY?

Local media has been reporting some of the facts of this story, but not all. As BOOST learned, it is a tireless process of connecting the dots. Tragically, although the money was distributed stupidly, it may have all been legal - and if so, the public must demand changes in our campaign financing and reporting procedures.

*NOTE: Councilman Wayne Gray stated in the Sun News today (Thursday, October 15, 2009) that "he didn't receive any money from the chamber. So far, he said, he has raised about \$50,000 and has filed his documents with the S.C. Ethics Commission on time, contrary to the allegations on the Web site." If his statement is true, then he is the only politician in South Carolina who submitted his filings on time using the Pony Express - everyone else files instantly online. The last posting for Mr. Gray online is dated September 8, 2009, at which time he still failed to report the receipt or expenditure of \$500 - the trigger point for required filing. Must be nice to have friends who pay for yard signs, street signs and the like ... Oh, wait, that would be in-kind contributions which ALSO must be reported.*

At the bottom of this story, we reprint the timeline of contributions as appearing on the website of the official State Ethics Commission ([www.ethics.sc.gov](http://www.ethics.sc.gov)). In the last 24 hours, these additional facts have come to light:

**June 8th:** State Representative Liston Barfield reports depositing eight (7) identical \$1,000 checks and one (1) check for \$500 from the exact same LLCs at the exact same addresses with the exact same Registered Agents.

**June 8th:** State Representative Thad Viers reports depositing twenty-four (24) identical \$1,000 checks from the exact same LLCs at the exact same addresses with the exact same Registered Agents.

**June 22nd.** Gubernatorial Candidate and US Congressman Gresham Barrett deposits 20 (twenty) checks of \$3,500 each from 20 of the 24 identical companies.

**July 25th:** State Representative Nelson Hardwick reports depositing twenty-four (24) identical \$1,000 checks from the exact same LLCs at the exact same addresses with the exact same Registered Agents.

**August 20th:** State Senator Ray Cleary reports depositing twenty-four (24) identical \$1,000 checks from the exact same LLCs at the exact same addresses with the exact same Registered Agents.

**August 31st:** State Representative George Hearn reports depositing twenty-four (24) identical \$1,000 checks from the exact same LLCs at the exact same addresses with the exact same Registered Agents.

**NEW!**



**September 4th:** State Representative Alan Clemmons reports depositing twenty-four (24) identical \$1,000 checks from the exact same LLCs at the exact same addresses with the exact same Registered Agents.

#### ORIGINAL REPORTS:

**June 8th:** Councilman Randal Wallace deposits twenty-four (24) identical \$1,000 checks from the exact same LLCs at the exact same addresses with the exact same Registered Agents. In his defense, Wallace, who has a reputation for telling-it-like-it-is, apparently thought nothing of the coincidental windfall as he is the only member of Council who reported it promptly and properly when he deposited the checks on June 8th.

**July 2nd:** Mayor John Rhodes deposits the exact same twenty-four (24) identical \$1,000 checks from the exact same LLCs at the exact same addresses with the exact same Registered Agents.

**October 6th:** Filings by Rhodes at the State Ethics Commission ([www.ethics.sc.com](http://www.ethics.sc.com)) showed no contributions and no

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expenditures. However, just two days after Van Winkle's charges, the Mayor posted a comprehensive list of expenditures and donations that prove, among other things, he failed to follow rules by reporting the first \$500 in donations or expenses within 10 days.

**October 8th:** Included in \$65,000+ in campaign contributions that Rhodes reported are 24 (twenty-four), \$1,000 contributions by the same 24 different LLC's – many sharing the same addresses and the same registered agent and all "deposited" on the exact same day - July 2nd. If he indeed received them in June, by making the deposits 48 hours after the Quarterly Filing Deadline of July 1st, Rhodes was apparently able to delay reporting them until October.

**October 12th:** Councilman Chuck Martino submits his online Ethics report which shows he received the same windfall - \$24,000 in twenty-four separate \$1,000 checks – same LLC's, same addresses, same Registered Agents.