

Alison White

From: Stan Nord
Sent: Friday, July 26, 2019 12:53 PM
To: Mayor and Council
Subject: Non-government interest in 1 Uptown
Attachments: Uptown 1 Interest.pdf

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Mayor and Council,

I am writing this email to express my concerns, propose ways to move forward, and advocate for open and transparent policy.

Recap

On June 20, 2019, I was contacted through text by a company that is currently located in Bloomington, IL. That company was exploring the possibility of relocating to the One Uptown building. They had already looked at the first floor of the building. The real estate representative had told the company that the Town of Normal wanted a restaurant to occupy that space. This is a screenshot of that text, with identifying information blacked out:



Thu, Jun 20, 2:00 PM

Hey Stan. Hope things are going well.

I wanted to follow up on our chat from a couple weeks ago regarding the open space in Uptown for [REDACTED]

We spoke with a real estate person who showed us the first floor space, we liked it but the rep said the city doesn't want a [REDACTED] company there, but want a restaurant.

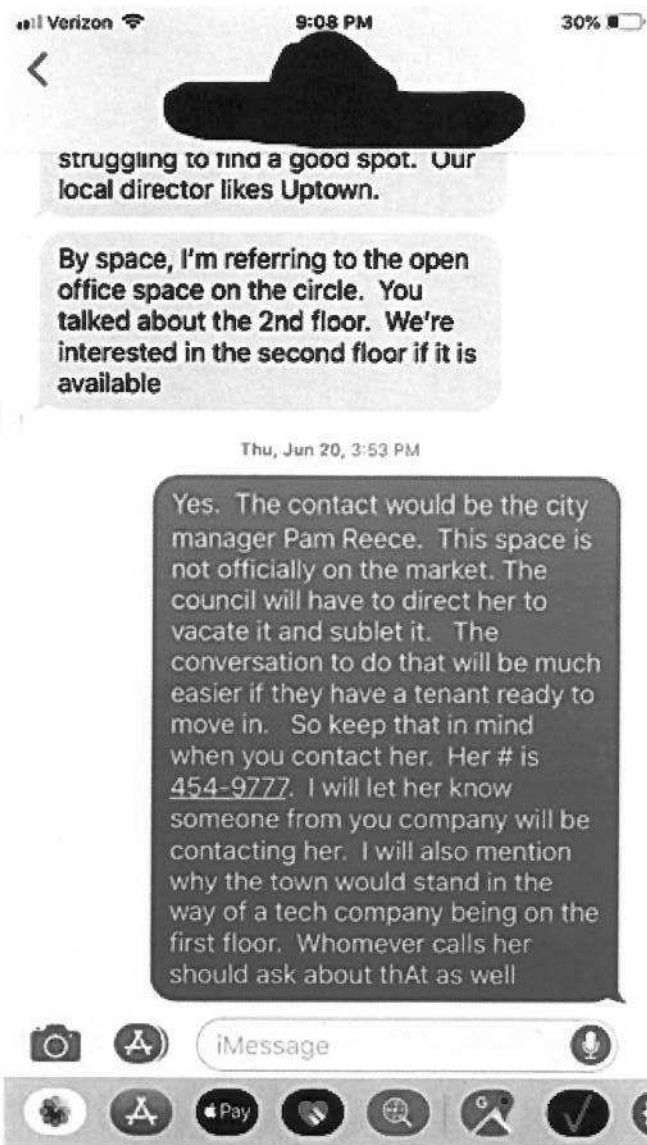
We're curious about the second floor space though. Do you have a name of someone who you'd recommend to show us and give us real world pricing? Our company is pretty serious about relocating from our current spot. Bloomington wants us to stay but we're struggling to find a good spot. Our local director likes Uptown.



iMessage



I gave that company the Town Manager's phone number. Here is the text response I sent them:



That same day, I emailed Normal's Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Mayor, and council members, informing them of this company's interest. Because this was a business-related interaction where the company wanted to explore possibilities, I did not want to draw any public attention to it and risk the company's privacy. That could potentially ruin an opportunity to bring many new, repeat customers to the restaurants and retailers in Uptown, and for Normal taxpayers to save a tremendous amount of money. A breach of privacy could also spoil all the other positive outcomes. Therefore, rather than include company information in that June 20 email—and leave the email open to possible FOIA requests—I stated in the email that I would provide the company contact information through a phone call, if necessary. These screenshots verify this information:

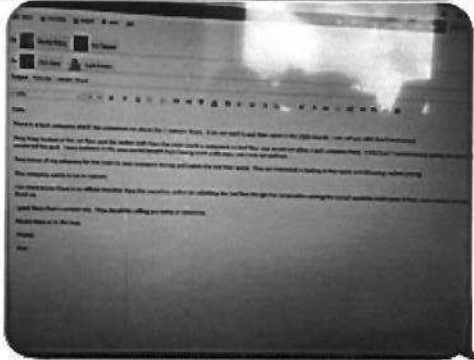




first floor. Whomever calls her should ask about that as well

Ok

I am just sending an email to her so she is not caught off guard. I'll send you a screen shot of it



I can't quite read the email. But that sounds good.

Let me know how it goes. I kept you name and company's name out of the email so it is kept private



iMessage





Let me know how it goes. I kept you name and company's name out of the email so it is kept private

Ok. Sounds good

Let me know if you receive any reluctance to get into whichever space and I will do everything I can to remove that barrier. Having a private company and all the customers your staff will bring to the nearby businesses is a huge win for the community. Not to mention the tax savings for the taxpayers of normal

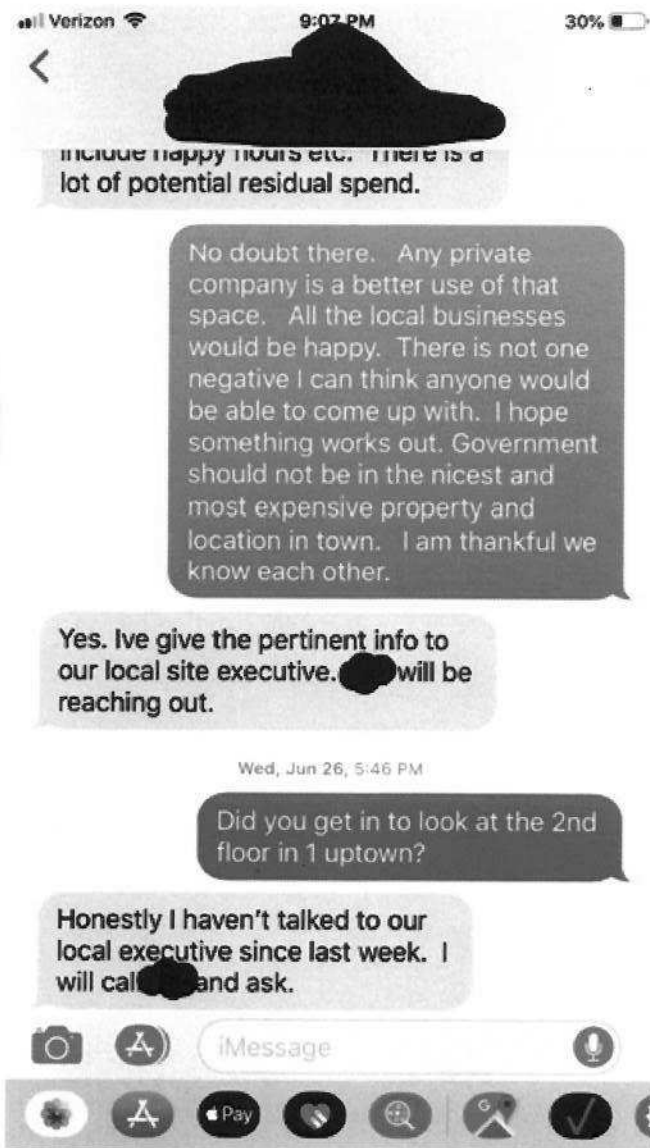
Ok. Cool. Thanks man

FYI. Each of our [redacted] is required to do [redacted] lunch meetings per week. We have [redacted]. The same for our [redacted] people. We have [redacted] people. That doesn't include happy hours etc. There is a lot of potential residual spend.



iMessage





Here is the June 20 email:

From: Stan Nord <snord@normal.org>
Date: Thu, June 20, 2019 5:03 PM -0500
To:
CC: Kathleen Lorenz <klorenz@normal.org>, Karyn Smith <ksmith@normal.org>, Chamberly Cummings <ccummings@normal.org>, Kevin McCarthy <kmccarthy@normal.org>
Subject: Fw: Potential 1 Uptown Tenant

[I somehow missed including everyone in the original CC.]

From: Stan Nord
Sent: Thursday, June 20, 2019 4:17:50 PM
To: Pamela Reece; Eric Hanson
Cc: Mayor Chris Koos; Scott Preston
Subject: Potential 1 Uptown Tenant

Pam,

There is a tech company which has contacted me about the 1 Uptown floors. (I do not want to put their name in the FOIA records. I can call you with that if necessary.)

They have looked at the 1st floor and the realtor told them the town wants a restaurant on that floor and would not allow a tech company there. Is this true? I would assume getting the space filled would be the goal. Every business in the area would benefit from having more customers, not more competitors.

They know of my advocacy for the town to save taxpayers money and sublet the 2nd floor rental. They are interested in looking at that space and discussing realistic pricing.

This company wants to be in Uptown.

I let them know there is no official direction from the council to authorize subletting the 2nd floor. Though the conversation among the council would be much easier if there were a tenant already lined up.

I gave them Pam's contact info. They should be calling you today or tomorrow.

Please keep us in the loop.

Thanks

Stan

On June 30, 2019, I asked the company if they would like me to put them in contact with the Economic Development Council (EDC). I called the VP of the EDC and relayed the contact information. I later gave the company the marketing brochure about One Uptown from LoopNet. Here are screenshots of those interactions:



Sun, Jun 30, 9:27 PM

I have to talk the the economic development council this week. Would you like me to give them your company's info so they can help streamline getting you space in Uptown? Or should I find out who your company should be talking with there and send you their contact info?

I haven't heard what conversations have taken place on our end. But I can give you the info for our [redacted] executive who makes that decision.



Director of BusinessOperations



iMessage





That will work.

I'll pass it on

Thanks

Wed, Jul 3, 10:15 AM

I was thinking you might have someone contact ISU about your desire to set up shop close to ISU. I would assume they would love for that to happen. That would give graduates a much closer and easier route to getting a job. I don't know who the isu contact would be. I assume start with the career center???





Nearly one month after the company contacted me, on July 16, 2019, Normal Mayor Koos sent a letter to the Bloomington Mayor and City Manager. Mayor Koos requested they disseminate that letter to the Bloomington City Council. It quickly made it to the press. In this letter, Mayor Koos stated that my conversations with this company were an “attempt to recruit a Bloomington tech business to relocate to the 2nd floor of Uptown 1.” The Mayor classified this as an attempt to “poach businesses from Bloomington.”

Mayor Renner, Mr. Gleason,

It has come to my attention that a member of my council has undertaken two personal initiatives without the support of the majority of the council and without discussion with Pam Reece. I am most concerned by these breach of protocols and agreements between the two municipalities.

The first issue is the apparent attempt to recruit a Bloomington tech business to relocate to the 2nd floor of Uptown 1, currently occupied by Town of Normal Engineering, Planning and Inspections staff. There is no current plan to relocate this staff. My deeper concern is the recruitment of a Bloomington business by a Normal Councilmember to relocate to Normal. This "lone wolf" action by a Normal Councilmember flies in the face of our mutual agreement to not recruit such relocations. If a business on its own makes that decision, fine, but we have agreed to not recruit across borders.

The second issue is this same councilmember recently met with Bloomington Fire Chief Mohr to discuss a joint fire station and the possible merger of the Bloomington Fire Department and the Normal Fire Department. The concept of the merger would be to gain efficiency and reduce staffing of both Departments by 25%. I am at a loss on where to begin here. There have been studies by both municipalities for a joint fire station, and it had been determined that a joint fire station was untenable. There has never been any discussion among the Town of Normal Staff or Council as to combining departments, nor do I have any idea where the basis of a 25% staff reduction came from.

To reiterate, the Normal Town Council honors the agreement not to poach businesses from Bloomington. We have not had any further discussions about a joint fire station or ANY discussion on combining the two Departments. I would ask that you share this with your council in the event that this becomes public and subject to wild rumor and speculation.

Chris Koos
Mayor
Town of Normal



The business wasn't recruited; they contacted me. The Mayor fabricated this scenario. He implied that I contacted this business with the intent to financially harm Bloomington.

I am concerned that this action of the Mayor has possibly destroyed all potential for this company to locate somewhere in Normal—the company made it clear to me they wanted to be close to the ISU campus, as shown in the text messages I have included. In fact, as the text message shows, they already have a partnership with ISU.

Concerns and Viewpoint

As a council member, I am working to encourage economic growth within our community and help businesses with their needs. The effort to help this company get the information they needed would benefit both Normal businesses and taxpayers. I have several concerns about the actions of the Mayor and the current situation with One Uptown:

- The business community within Bloomington-Normal will see the actions the Normal Mayor took as a deliberate attempt to discourage all interest by this company to sublet the second floor of One Uptown.
- The Mayor's action of publicly announcing the intentions of a private business in a hostile and fictitious manor does not foster good business relations.
- Taxpayers will see this an intentional attempt by government to continue to overspend nearly \$425k per year to rent this particular space when other alternatives are available to the Town—if the Town would pursue these alternatives, the Town would save taxpayers significant money.
- Through several email conversations and face-to-face discussions, Normal's Town Manager has made it clear that a prior council action approved Town staff to rent this space at well over market rate, and a

majority council action will be required to sublet this space or to try to reduce this exorbitant taxpayer expense.

- The Mayor and the Town of Normal are knowingly and deliberately spending more taxpayer money than necessary. This is a fleecing of hardworking citizens and businesses.
- These actions continue to erode trust the taxpayers have in the decisions the Town makes with their money.

Proposals

- Regarding the One Uptown lease, the council should officially approve an action directing staff to use all best efforts to save taxpayers money—that includes actively pursuing the subletting the second floor of One Uptown.
- Once the council has approved that action, any communication and negotiation with a potential tenant should be treated like most commercial lease transactions, through real estate brokers. Seasoned commercial brokers will keep the discussions business related and confidential to the extent they can be, and will provide the best chance for success on behalf of the taxpayers of Normal.
- The Town should immediately put into place a policy for the use of a real estate broker and appraiser for the marketing and negotiating of real estate transactions of any Town-owned property for taxpayer protection and transparency. (This assumes such a policy is not already in place.)
- The Town should definitively state what business type restrictions the Town imposes on the first floor of One Uptown beyond what zoning dictates. The real estate market and the property brokers are unsure and need clarity and transparency.
- The Town should put into place, publish, and communicate a policy that guides council members about whom they should contact when a member of the public or a company expresses interest in municipal assets. (This assumes such a policy is not already in place. Through a July 21, 2019 email the town manager wrote, “I don’t believe there is a policy directing to whom someone should speak. Practice is for Council to direct inquiries to Administration.”) – This is exactly what I did.

Request for Public Transparency

I feel the actions of the Mayor have damaged relations, eroded taxpayer trust, and derailed economic growth in the Uptown area and this community.

I do not expect Normal’s Mayor will issue a retraction and provide public transparency to the facts.

However, for the sake openness and transparency, I would expect Normal’s Town Manager to release a statement to the press and those who were provided the inaccurate statements issued by the Mayor should disclose their communications with the Town Manager, Mayor, and Town Council to verify the actual chain of events.

I request the opportunity to review this statement in advance so a follow-up statement will not be required.

Conclusion

All of my actions have been for the purpose of making Normal a more business-friendly community, saving taxpayers money, and promoting situations that benefit the Bloomington-Normal community as a whole.

In particular, I must reiterate that working on friendly terms with this one company would have benefited the Town of Normal and the taxpayers by either filling the first floor of One Uptown, or by reducing taxpayer

expenses through a sublet of the second floor and bringing economic growth to the Uptown area. It would have befitted this company by locating them closer to ISU, and that in turn would have benefited the community by fostering opportunities for students and residents.

That relationship may be damaged now, though I certainly hope we can still move forward with exploring the possibilities.

Thank you,

Stan Nord, Normal Town Council

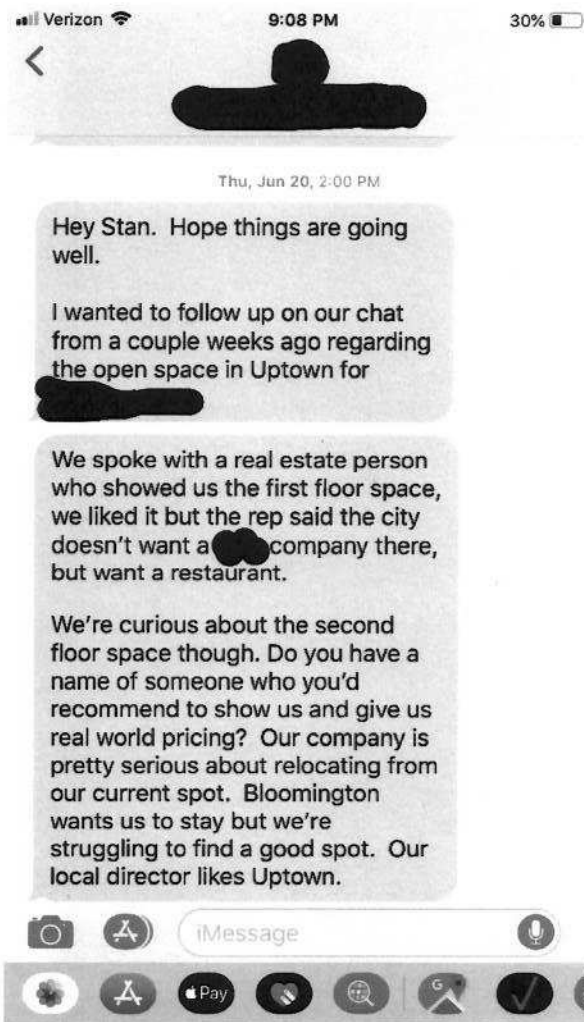
July 26, 2019

Mayor and Council,

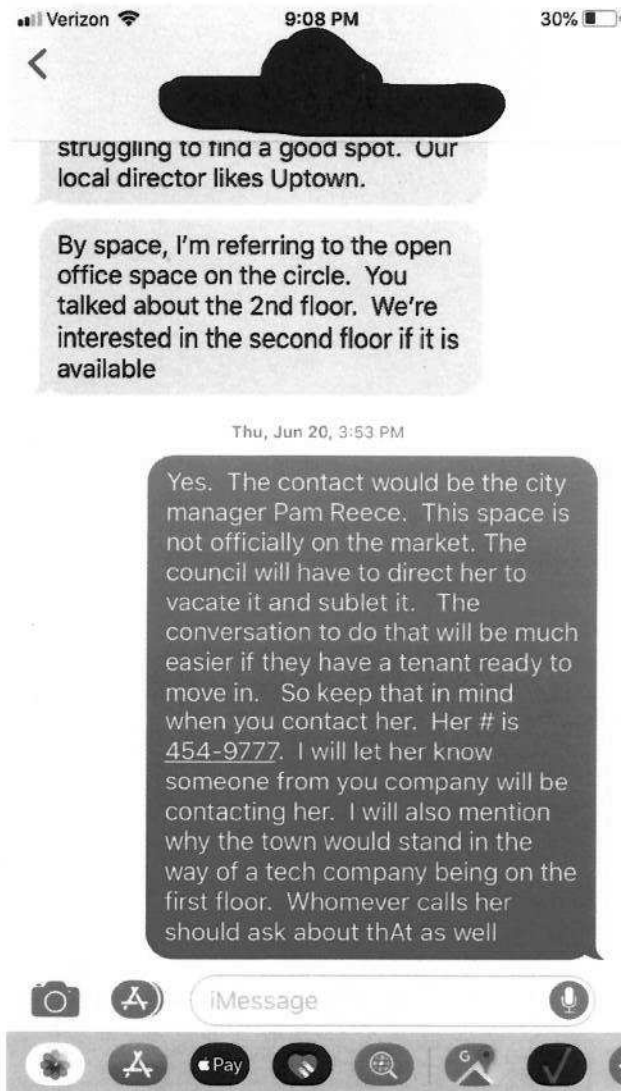
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I gave that company the Town Manager's phone number. Here is the text response I sent them:



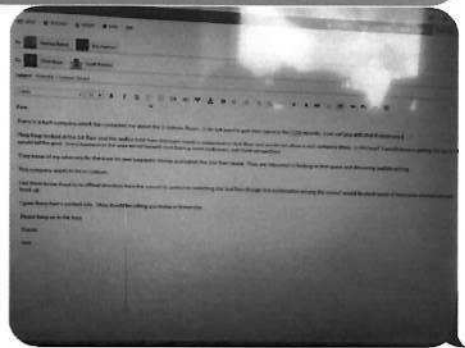
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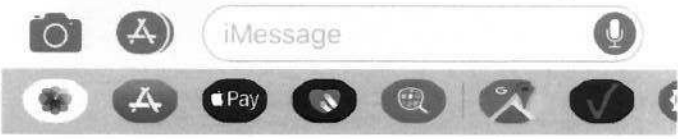
Ok

I am just sending an email to her so she is not caught off guard. I'll send you a screen shot of it



I can't quite read the email. But that sounds good.

Let me know how it goes. I kept you name and company's name out of the email so it is kept private



Verizon

9:07 PM

30%



Let me know how it goes. I kept you name and company's name out of the email so it is kept private

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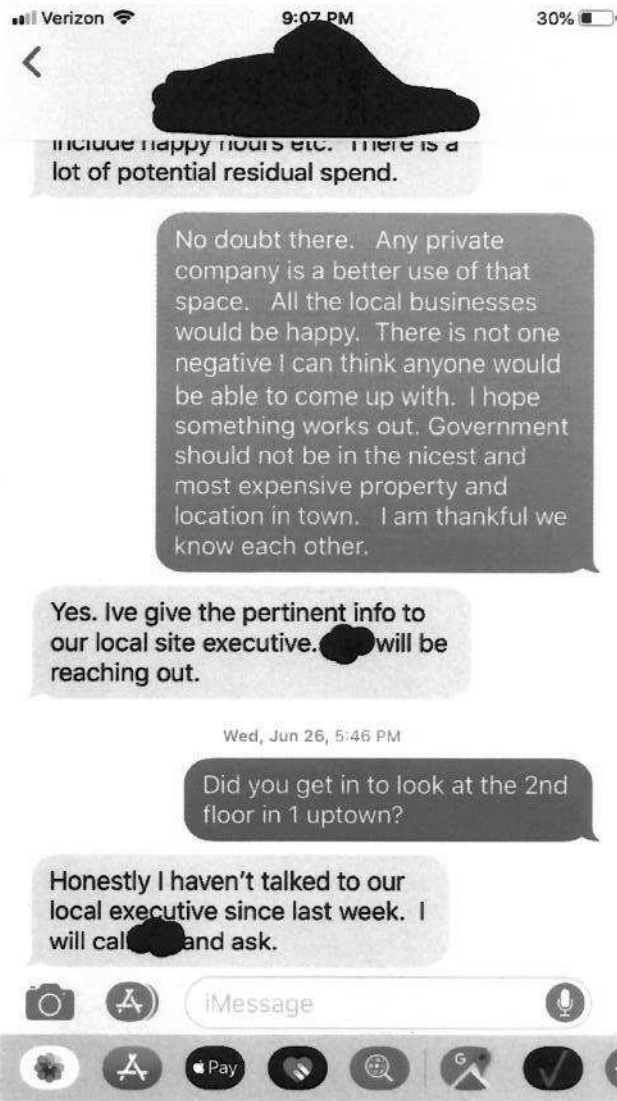
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[Redacted contact information]

Director of Business Operations



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