



Citizens Group Prevails In Court; City of Beaumont Managers Fail To Silence Critics

Beaumont Citizens for Responsible Growth Wins Lawsuit Filed Against Them By Urban Logic Consultants

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(Riverside) A Riverside County Superior Court commissioner ruled on Tuesday in favor of a citizens group in a lawsuit filed against them by managers for the City of Beaumont.

Members of the Board of Directors of the non-profit group Beaumont Citizens for Responsible Growth (BCRG) were served on Thanksgiving Day with the lawsuit brought against them by Urban Logic Consultants (ULC), a private company that provides Planning, Public Works and Economic Development services to the City of Beaumont.

At issue is a website sponsored by BCRG in which the group voices its concerns about the contracting practices of the City. On its site, www.BeaumontGate.org, the group accuses the City of a long history of favoritism in the awarding of public contracts, and claims that ULC's contract creates a conflict of interest because the company is paid a percentage of the bid amount of approved projects. The lawsuit filed by ULC against BCRG claimed that the accusations in the website are false and have damaged the company's reputation.

On Tuesday the Riverside County Superior Court sided strongly with BCRG, throwing out the lawsuit and confirming that the accusations made on www.BeaumontGate.org did not constitute defamation. BCRG's motion, which was upheld by the Court, confirmed that the accusations made on www.BeaumontGate.org are not false, not defamatory, and are well-founded on public record. In addition, the Court firmly rejected Urban Logic's claims that BCRG members acted out of malice.

It took Superior Court Commissioner Paulette Durand-Barkley only ten minutes to render the decision in favor of BCRG. As a result of the ruling Urban Logic will be ordered to pay attorney fees and court costs incurred by BCRG, the exact amount to be determined at a later hearing.

Beaumont Councilwoman Nancy Gall expressed optimism that things might change at City Hall in the wake of this ruling. "I'm happy that the Court has affirmed the rights of citizens

to speak out and ask the government for a redress of grievances. I know that the information on BeaumontGate is true and that this lawsuit has been a terrible waste of time, money, and emotions.”

BCRG President Judy Bingham was also hopeful that the ruling might lead to change at City Hall. “For too long a private company (Urban Logic) has been allowed to personally profit every time it recommends that a project be approved...and for too long they have used threats and intimidation to protect this revenue stream. Trying to sue a group of concerned citizens into silence is just another example of this corruption. It is time for the City to end its relationship with Urban Logic Consultants.”

Beaumont resident Adam Wagner, stated “It’s heartening to see our judicial system doing the right thing by standing up for the common citizen and protecting our First Amendment rights.” He went on to say, “I’ve been to many city council meetings and have witnessed first-hand how the company named in the lawsuit maintains a stranglehold over the City of Beaumont and its affairs by intimidating detractors, threatening individuals who courageously speak out against them and by restricting public access to information. Now I am looking to and hoping that the City Council will follow suit by terminating the contract of those named in the lawsuit and from this point forward awarding all public contracts openly and fairly based on the State guidelines for competitive bidding on public projects. We elected them to the Council to represent the citizens honorably and if they fail to do so then we the people will elect qualified individuals who will.”

BCRG was represented by Andy Roth and Jenna Acuff of Reid & Hellyer, a law firm based in downtown Riverside. Following the favorable outcome Roth stated, “Thanks to outstanding legal work by Jenna Acuff, a Riverside judge agreed that Urban Logic’s lawsuit against BCRG was an improper attempt to silence critics of the lucrative deal Urban Logic has enjoyed with the City of Beaumont for almost two decades. BCRG and other concerned citizens can continue to exercise their First Amendment right to publish information gathered from public records shedding light on the way Urban Logic and city officials Dillon, Eggers and Moorjani controlled and received millions of taxpayer dollars since 1993.”

“I am just happy to see that the hard work and dedication of the members of BCRG paid off and that their message for a responsible government can still reach the citizens of Beaumont,” said Acuff.

More information, including Court documentation related to the lawsuit, can be found at BCRG’s website, www.bcr.org, and at www.BeaumontGate.org.

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