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Richfield City Council, Ward 2
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October 23, 2024

Members of the committee:

As a local elected official, I am in favor of additional study of local lobbying and reasonable requirements for registration, when hired professionals work to influence city council members like me.

I have served as a Richfield City Council member for four years, and previously served six years as a member of the Richfield Planning Commission. Although this issue is not part of our city legislative platform, I have experienced the need for greater regulation here. Both as a Planning Commissioner and City Council member, I have had calls and meetings from hired contractors (attorneys, developer representatives) who were attempting to influence the process.

There is value in developers and their representatives sometimes meeting one-on-one with electeds, allowing an informal conversation and discussion of details that are difficult to manage in the formal approvals. However, there is also a need for transparency when this occurs.

Just this year, I received a call from a hired attorney, who described himself as trying to help a local business cut through red tape with our staff. In fact, this individual was attempting to avoid the required public process, by persuading electeds to pressure staff and look the other way on his client's applications. I was suspicious of his description of the situation, but I reached out to staff only because I recognized the attorney's name from a previous approval I considered when I was a member of the Planning Commission.

I shouldn't have had to recognize an attorney by name to understand the scope of his lobbying efforts. This information should be freely available to all local elected officials, and to the public at large. We need rules that will help bring needed transparency, and ensure that local officials like me can help make decisions that are fair to the Minnesotans we represent.

Thank you for your consideration.



Sean Hayford Oleary
Richfield City Council member, Ward 2