

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.  
2200 Camp Branch Road  
Waynesville, NC 28786  
January 13, 2023

**Subject:** EDC - Chamber of Commerce - David Francis - What is the connection? Email dialog with CeCe.

We are going to explore some messy stuff here, which includes the (now defunct?) Economic Development Council, which is connected at the hip (slight pun here) to the Haywood Chamber of Commerce. Who is on this Economic Development Council, and what have we received for the hundreds of thousands of dollars (not nearly Six Million) that have been poured into this arrangement?

The Haywood Chamber of Commerce, a.k.a. Greater Haywood County Chamber, is a 501(c)6 corporation, and not subject to Public Information Requests, much as **Sarge's** (see entire section on **Sarge's** on [www.haywoodtp.net](http://www.haywoodtp.net) under Interesting Stuff archives). It is not clear at this point what the Economic Development Council even is, nor who to contact.

So this will be an interesting story to follow, which you will not see in either of the two local papers, the mountaineer nor the smn tabloid. Although **Scott McLeod**, Editor of the smn tabloid, has been identified as past chair of the Chamber of Commerce.

This starts out with the following bits and pieces, and left to the reader to connect the dots.

- My public comment on the Economic Development Council,
- My Request for Public Information relating to contracts between the County and the Chamber,
- An “interesting” email dialog with CeCe Hipps, President of the Chamber of Commerce.

Here we go...

---

From my January 3, 2023 Public Comment at the Haywood County Commission meeting:

- There has been research put out on a local website, HaywoodHappenings.org about the Asheville Chamber of Commerce is paid by Haywood County to promote our Economic Development. Haywood County is pouring a lot of money for years into the Chamber of Commerce and the Haywood Economic Development Council. What are Haywood County Taxpayers getting in return for this expenditure?

---

Next, my Request for Public Information relating to contracts between the County and the Chamber of Commerce.

Subject: Request for Public Information - County revamps economic development program - contracts.

Date: Tue, 10 Jan 2023 23:09:03 -0500

From: Monroe Miller

To: Bryant Morehead <bryant.morehead@haywoodcountync.gov>, Amy Stevens <Amy.Stevens@haywoodcountync.gov>, Kristian Owen <kristian.owen@haywoodcountync.gov>, Frank Queen <Frank.Queen@haywoodcountync.gov>

CC: CeCe Hipps <chipps@haywoodchamber.com>, Terry Ramey <terry.ramey@haywoodcountync.gov>, Brandon Rogers <brandon.rogers@haywoodcountync.gov>, Tommy Long <Tommy.Long@haywoodcountync.gov>

Mr. Morehead,

Please refer to the following article by Vicki Hyatt, "County revamps economic development program", 7/29/2020,

[https://www.themountaineer.com/news/county-revamps-economic-development-program/article\\_994f6dc-e-cca9-11ea-b243-63809c5c7e82.html](https://www.themountaineer.com/news/county-revamps-economic-development-program/article_994f6dc-e-cca9-11ea-b243-63809c5c7e82.html).

Two (2) contracts are mentioned:

- One in 2018, a three year contact signed between commissioners and the Chamber of Commerce,
- A second, an amended contract, signed in July of 2020.

Please provide a copy of both of those "signed" contracts. This is a Request for Public Information.

Also provide a copy of funds delivered to the Chamber of Commerce during those contract periods, to present, a period of five (5) years, so that I can compare it with IRS Form 990 for the year 2020 - "Greater Haywood County Chamber", and prior Form 990's.

[2020 Form 990, Haywood County Chamber of Commerce \(now on the radar\), CeCe Hipps President. Check out the Directors... 1/7/2023...](#)

Thank you,

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

---

Subject: RE: Request for Public Information - County revamps economic development program - contracts. #2

Date: Thu, 12 Jan 2023 23:16:50 +0000

From: Bryant Morehead <Bryant.Morehead@haywoodcountync.gov>

To: Monroe Miller

The full BOC is blind copied on this email.

Request received.

---

This sets the backdrop for me going outside the box and attending my first ever Chamber of Commerce Event,

[“On behalf of the Haywood Chamber of Commerce, thank you for registering for Elected Official Reception on 1/9/2023 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM EST. We look forward to seeing you at the event.”](#)

I had never been inside the Well’s Event Center, and it only cost me \$35.00. It is very nice inside, and everyone should do this when they get the opportunity.

I took a photo of elected officials during the meeting, and then decided to forward it to CeCe Hipps, the President of the Haywood Chamber of Commerce. Who knows where this was going to go.

Subject: smn tabloid opinion

Date: Wed, 11 Jan 2023 13:04:48 -0500

From: Monroe Miller

To: CeCe Hipps <chipps@haywoodchamber.com>

CC: Scott McLeod <info@smokymountainnews.com>, Greg Boothroyd <ads@smokymountainnews.com>, Becky Johnson <bjohnson@themountaineer.com>, Terry Ramey <terry.ramey@haywoodcountync.gov>, Kyle Perrotti <kyle.p@smokymountainnews.com>

Hi CeCe,

Don't forget to look at the Opinion piece Scott McLeod wrote in today's smn tabloid! It's all about me!

<https://smokymountainnews.com/opinion/item/34958-when-success-is-about-making-communities-better>

Also, here is a great photo I took the other night.



Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

Subject: RE: smn tabloid opinion  
Date: Wed, 11 Jan 2023 18:40:38 +0000  
From: CeCe Hipps <chipps@haywoodchamber.com>  
To: Monroe Miller

Monroe,

Thank you for bringing the article to my attention and the great photo. Can I use the photo in our write-up after the event?

The article was well written, and Scott told the Chamber's story better than I probably could have, and it is an excellent testament to what I do. I hope being at the event also gave you a better perspective of our focus.

My father taught me a valuable life lesson; build bridges, don't destroy them, and use your talents to make a positive difference. My father is no longer with me as I desperately need his calm and guiding voice today, especially with the unnecessary false accusations of being caught up in a newspaper scandal that I had no part of.

I also hope that you will build bridges and use your talents in a way that will bring positive change. Hopefully, one day you will understand that not everyone who works to improve a community is a thief and liar. I am a registered Republican who votes for the candidate who is best qualified for the position regardless of the R and D. I'm certainly not a liar or thief.

Lastly, please correct the information you emailed regarding the EO Reception. It was neither hosted nor emceed by SMN.

CeCe

CeCe Hipps, CCE, IOM  
President  
Haywood Chamber of Commerce  
28 Walnut St. Waynesville, NC 28786  
828.456.3021  
[chipps@haywoodchamber.com](mailto:chipps@haywoodchamber.com)

Subject: Re: smn tabloid opinion  
Date: Wed, 11 Jan 2023 14:28:33 -0500  
From: Monroe Miller  
To: CeCe Hipps <chipp@haywoodchamber.com>

Hi CeCe,

First, feel free to use the photo. I know how hard it is to get a photo out of Becky Johnson.

The event was interesting, and I would guess that only about 20% of the folks there would not speak to me, with the exception of Scott McLeod, which, as he indicated, was an amicable conversation.

As an FYI, I, just for fun, attempted to determine the political make-up of your current board of directors, even though the organization is non-partisan. This is what I came up with -

3 Rep  
7 Dem  
3 Una  
5 (? Could not determine)  
1 Lib

One notable person who did not attend was Sebastian Cothran, the new Tax Collector.

Bridges - I go by two famous sayings about bridges;

"May the bridges I burn Light the Way" - Jeremy Davis (RIP)  
"Build your opponent a golden bridge to retreat across" - Sun Tzu

Thief's and Liar's - Not sure who called you a thief or liar. My guiding life principle (around here anyway) is: If a person who is either appointed or elected to a position of power, and they either intimidate someone because of their power, or abuse their power, I will go after them. My website is littered with folks gone by the wayside. I don't know about you, but I certainly don't appreciate anyone lying to me.

Finally, I don't understand your last sentence about what an EO Reception is or who it was hosted or emceed by. Feel free to clarify.

Newspaper scandal - I guess you have one person to thank for that, Cory Villaincourt, and he is still at it.

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

Subject: RE: smn tabloid opinion  
Date: Wed, 11 Jan 2023 20:03:43 +0000  
From: CeCe Hipps <chipp@haywoodchamber.com>  
To: Monroe Miller

Monroe:

Thank you for the use of the photo. I agree it is a great picture.

I'm glad that you found the event interesting which I could think of many adjectives other than interesting. Of course, the point was to thank our elected officials and provide the opportunity to network among attendees; in which we accomplished. You did better than I did on the people who did not speak to you. Did you try to speak to them. Regarding the political makeup, it's not even a though since we are a non-partisan organization. My board of directors are elected based upon their position in the community and experience not their political affiliation nor have I ever spend one moment thinking about that. It is more important to our organization that it is a diverse mix of business representation, gender, diversity, and age. I guess the age bracket they fall into since I do not ask that personal question but if you would like to research that for me; go ahead. So far, it looks like I am doing pretty good since there were five you could not identify. That's just the way I like political affiliations; when you can't tell and the way it should be. Also, note the chamber is a very conservative organization.

All elected officials were contacted multiple times. In fact, it was a drain of my time and resources following up on those who could not reply "yes" or "no". Sebastain did reply that he could not attend due to his classes starting back that evening. He will continue to be invited to any and all events that are pertinent to his position as so with the others.

I agree Corey wrote the article in which once again I did not endorse or have anything to do with and yes unfairly, my board of directors, the chamber and myself were brought into the drama. The Chamber had nothing to do with it but, it does help fuel the flames as if anymore were needed.

"It came to our attention that the Chambers Reception tonight, for the Haywood County EO's basically endorsed, hosted and MC'd by SMN...." The entire statement is incorrect and if you stand by your words you should correct the statement.

CeCe

Subject: Re: smn tabloid opinion  
Date: Wed, 11 Jan 2023 15:16:34 -0500  
From: Monroe Miller  
To: CeCe Hipps <chipps@haywoodchamber.com>

CeCe,

“It came to our attention that the Chambers Reception tonight, for the Haywood County EO’s basically endorsed, hosted and MC’d by SMN....” The entire statement is incorrect and if you stand by your words you should correct the statement.

That is not a sentence I would write, I would have said "It came to my attention...", not "our attention".

Wait a minute! I found it!

It was in an email sent out by the Concerned Citizens of Haywood. The entire quote reads:

"It's come to our attention that the Chamber Reception tonight, for the Haywood County Elected Officials, is basically endorsed, hosted, and MC'd by Smoky Mountain News. We, as Concerned Citizens, now believe this event is not an event that should be supported or attended by Citizens or Newly Elected Conservative/Republican Officials. We also believe that all Haywood County Government Buildings should immediately remove The Smoky Mountain News from the Newsstands, currently set up, in most of our Haywood County tax funded buildings due to their "agenda driven", biased, and "one-sided" reporting."

I don't appreciate your saying that I was responsible for this quote. I had nothing to do with this email.

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

Subject: RE: smn tabloid opinion  
Date: Wed, 11 Jan 2023 20:32:16 +0000  
From: CeCe Hipps <chipps@haywoodchamber.com>  
To: Monroe Miller

I apologize if it was not you. Do you know who it was?

---

Subject: Re: smn tabloid opinion  
Date: Wed, 11 Jan 2023 15:39:14 -0500  
From: Monroe Miller  
To: CeCe Hipps <chipps@haywoodchamber.com>

CeCe,

It was not me - I'm not sure if that was an apology or not. It was sent out by the Concerned Citizens of Haywood.

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

---

Subject: Re: smn tabloid opinion  
Date: Wed, 11 Jan 2023 15:48:23 -0500  
From: Monroe Miller  
To: CeCe Hipps <chipps@haywoodchamber.com>

See:

<https://haywoodhappenings.org/content.haywoodhappenings.org/viewtopic.php?t=158&sid=ca6893dc4e508ba90cba92f6b9a45b2c>

---

Subject: New Toeprints.  
Date: Thu, 12 Jan 2023 10:31:39 -0500  
From: Monroe Miller  
To: CeCe Hipps <chipps@haywoodchamber.com>  
CC: Vicki Hyatt <vhyatt@themountaineer.com>, Jonathan Key <jkey@themountaineer.com>, Scott McLeod <info@smokymountainnews.com>, Greg Boothroyd <ads@smokymountainnews.com>, Becky Johnson <bjohnson@themountaineer.com>, Kyle Perrotti <kyle.p@smokymountainnews.com>

CeCe,

Don't forget to see: <https://www.haywoodtp.net/pubTP/T230112.pdf>

The Chamber gets an honorable mention.

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.

---

<eof>