

MINNPOST

Rep. Phyllis Kahn files ethics complaint, says Rep. Denny McNamara screamed at her

By Joe Kimball | 06/08/15

State Rep. Phyllis Kahn, a DFLer from Minneapolis, has filed an ethics complaint against GOP state Rep. Denny McNamara, saying he shouted at her and accused her of being "conniving and deceitful" during an argument about the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board and McNamara's family nursery.

Update: McNamara, a Republican from Hastings, said in a statement Monday afternoon that he'd been told by other lawmakers that a parks lobbyist would seek retaliation against his son's nursery business if he went ahead with a bill that changed parks funding.

He says "in the heat of the heat of the moment, I reacted in a way that I now regret."

He said his anger was directed at Park Board lobbyist Brian Rice, who was in the meeting with Kahn and who he initially thought had made the threat. He said he later learned it was another lobbyist.

State Rep. Dennis Smith, a Republican from Maple Grove, says he was there at the Kahn/Rice/McNamara meeting and didn't feel McNamara went after Kahn: "I attended the meeting and at no time felt that Representative McNamara's comments were directed towards Rep. Kahn, nor did Rep. McNamara ever approach Rep. Kahn in a threatening manner."

The germane issue was a contentious provision in McNamara's bill that would change a funding plan that Kahn and Rice had worked on in the 1980s that directed interest earnings from the Met Council Bond fund to the North Mississippi Regional Park.

According to Kahn's account:

She and Rice went to McNamara's state office on May 16 to discuss a parks funding issue. McNamara, she said, told them that park officials were doing less business with his family nursery and had stopped buying landscaping materials and services, allegedly following a threat made in connection with the funding provision.

Rice and Kahn denied the accusation. Kahn's



complaint said:

Representative Kahn stated that she had not heard anyone threaten his family's business. Rather, she had only heard that he, Representative McNamara, had felt his family's company was not receiving the business it had in prior years. Representative McNamara claimed he had a recording (voice mail message) to prove it, which he never played. Representative McNamara again stated that a Minneapolis Park Board

lobbyist had threatened to take business away from his family's nursery. Mr. Rice denied that he had ever made such a statement. Representative McNamara then said he had talked with a senior female legislator who claims that she heard a Park Board lobbyist make such a statement.

The complaint also said:

He then became incredibly agitated and accused Representative Kahn and Mr. Rice of being deceitful and conniving. He became red in the face, rose to his feet, and began screaming for them to get out of his office. Representative McNamara continued to yell as he slammed his door on Representative Kahn and Mr. Rice as they exited. His yelling was so loud it could be heard on the other side of the building by Legislative Assistant Travis Reese (Room 377A State Office Building), and by Representative John Persell, who was in his office (Room 359 State Office Building) with the door closed.

... In 43 years of serving in the Legislature, Representative Kahn claims to have never felt so threatened and domineered by a fellow legislator.

In his statement today, McNamara said:

"To Rep. Kahn, with whom I've always had a great working relationship, I would like to apologize, as my words were not directed at her but to Mr. Rice, who I thought had made the threat. The point I was attempting to make was that votes cast by members of the legislature, whether Republican or Democrat, should never be held against their family members. As I made very clear, my integrity is not for sale.

"After this meeting, the DFL lawmaker who first brought this matter to my attention, conveyed to me that the threat to my son's business came from Maryanne Campo, another lobbyist for the Minneapolis Park Board."

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COMMENTS (6)

Well...

SUBMITTED BY EDWARD BLAISE ON JUNE 8, 2015 - 11:29PM.

If we want to find an ethics violation let's look beyond the yelling and get to legislators fighting for private business interests that enriches them via state contracts. Go to the Hoffman McNamara landscaping web site and see that one of their specialties is "public sector projects". Rep. McNamara needs to decide if he is in the landscaping business or the legislating business and run with one or make certain that his private job is completely separate and free from any government entanglements.

"free from any government entanglements?"

SUBMITTED BY DENNIS TESTER ON JUNE 9, 2015 - 7:51AM.

If that's the criteria then every attorney in the legislature should be disqualified from serving since any law