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## Rep. Denny McNamara accused in ethics filing

By S Brandt | JUNE 8, 2015 — 5:32PM

Two legislators have filed an ethics complaint against state Rep. Denny McNamara that alleges that he shouted accusations at them and that a landscaping and nursery business he formerly owned was getting less business from the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

The two DFL legislators contend that the Hastings Republican threatened to expose an alleged Park Board threat against the family business unless they agreed to a proposal he favored to change how money flows to North Mississippi Regional Park..

But McNamara released a statement Monday that accused Park Board lobbyist Maryann Campo of making the threat to retaliate against a business he said is owned by his son. Campo flatly denied that. McNamara also apologized to one of the legislators, Rep, Phyllis Kahn.

The complaint was filed by Kahn, of Minneapolis, and John Persell of Bemidji. The complaint grew out a May 16 meeting involving McNamara, Kahn and Brian Rice, a Park Board lobbyist. Persell was in a nearby office, heard the yelling, and left this office thinking he was headed to break up a fight, the complaint alleges.

According to President Mike McNamara, the legislator's son, his father has not been involved in the Hastings-based Hoffman & McNamara landscaping business since selling it to him in 2004. However, McNamara's statement of economic interest filing still lists him as owner and partner in the business.

The firm has been on the Park Board's list of approved suppliers for trees for years. The Park Board had a dozen such suppliers in 2014 and 15 suppliers this year, as it planted more trees to offset ash losses. The Hastings firm sold 412 trees for \$81,147 to the Park Board this year, about the same as in 2013, but less than the \$138,573 it sold to Minneapolis parks last year.

"We thoroughly enjoy our relationship with the Park Board," Mike McNamara said.

In the complaint, Kahn claims that she's "never felt so threatened and domineered by a fellow legislator" in her 43 years in the House. McNamara's statement said that he'd been told by a unnamed DFL legislator that a Park Board lobbyist had said there might be retaliation against the business if funding for the regional park was modified.

McNamara said that during a meeting with Rice, who he thought then had made the threat, "I reacted in a way that I now regret." He said he was told later that the threat came from Campo. McNamara's statement included a comment from Rep. Dennis Smith, R-Maple Grove, who also attended the meeting, that he didn't feel that McNamara was attacking Kahn or approach her in a threatening manner. Campo suggested in a brief interview that there's a conflict between McNamara's chairmanship of a House environment and natural resources committee and his concern for the business.

The dispute involves efforts to change how accumulated interest is spent when the Metropolitan Council sells bonds for park purposes but the money isn't spent as soon as the bonds are sold. That money long has been devoted exclusively entirely to acquiring and developing North Mississippi Regional Park and nearby park facilities under a statutory provision Rice crafted 30 years ago.

After a [Star Tribune article](http://www.startribune.com/obscure-law-helps-transform-) (<http://www.startribune.com/obscure-law-helps-transform->

[a-minneapolis-regional-park/2/537/041/](#)) noted the longstanding flow of money earmarked to a particular park, attempts were made (<http://www.startribune.com/legislators-target-special-funding-for-upper-riverfront-park/291481821/>) during the regular legislative session during broaden the distribution of a source of money that Rice said yields an average of about \$400,000 annually.

Pending legislation would allow the Park Board to collect the money for three more years to help pay for the cost of the adjacent natural filtration swimming pool at Webber Park in north Minneapolis. Then the earnings would be distributed among metro park agencies in proportion of the amount of operating funding they receive through the Metro Council. Minneapolis would get about 25 percent of that distribution.



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