

## Public Records Request #4076

The following materials have been gathered in response to public records request #4076. These materials include:

- Complaint Form – Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements – Councilmember Tariq Bokhari – 8/7/2020
- Complaint Form – Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements – Councilmember Tariq Bokhari – 8/7/2020
- Complaint Form – Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements – Councilmember Tariq Bokhari – 8/10/2020
- Complaint Form – Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements – Councilmember Tariq Bokhari – 8/15/2020
- Complaint Form – Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements – Councilmember Tariq Bokhari – 8/16/2020
- Complaint Form – Supplemental Document
- Complaint Form – Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements – Mayor Pro Tem Julie Eiselt – 8/18/2020

This information was provided as a response to a public records request on 8/19/20 and is current to that date. There is a possibility of more current information and/or documents related to the stated subject matter.

### Further Information

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For further information about this request or the Citywide Records Program, please contact:

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Citywide Records Program Manager  
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Charlotte, NC 28202  
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RECEIVED

AUG 7 2020

OFFICE OF CITY CLERK



CHARLOTTE

# Complaint Form

## Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements

TODAY'S DATE: 8/5/2020

THIS COMPLAINT IS PERTAINING TO (Please check one): A separate form must be completed for each complaint.

THE MAYOR AND/ OR A COUNCIL MEMBER OR  A MEMBER OF A BOARD, COMMITTEE OR COMMISSION

**1. PERSON FILING THE COMPLAINT:**

FULL NAME: Tina Katsanos

ADDRESS: 13524 Carleen Way Dr.

CITY, STATE & ZIP CODE: Charlotte NC 28213

HOME PHONE: 704-604-9096 WORK PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE: Same as home

**2. PERSON ALLEGED TO HAVE COMMITTEED AN UNETHICAL ACT:**

Tariq Bokhari

**3. ETHICS PROVISION VIOLATED: (List the chapter names, sections and, sub-sections, if applicable)**

From the Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure  
Section 2, Section 3A, Section 4

**4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT: (State with specificity the facts that form the basis of your complaint)**

Section 2: Violation of exhibiting trustworthiness - Tariq Bokhari was not transparent with his interests in Carolina's Fintech partnering into a monetary contract

4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1:

with the City of Charlotte. Section 3A: The decision to award Carolina Fintech, Bokhari's COMPANY, 1.5 million dollars whereas Bokhari is a seated council member is a violation of this Section 3A and a violation of the ethical responsibility we expect from Charlotte City Council. It (the deal) is an egregious conflict of interest. Section 4: Tariq Bokhari manifests implicit and explicit bias and racism in his language and actions and for this reason, he is not respected or trusted by anyone with a modicum of critical thinking skills. Section 5: The Fintech deal was kept secret - it was not a transparent arrangement - the arrangement was beyond opaque. The citizens of Charlotte are part of city governance and should be afforded full disclosure of where and how the city decides to spend OUR dollars.

SIGNATURE

Tina Katsanos

PRINT NAME

8/5/2020

DATE

FOR OFFICIAL USE:	
DEPARTMENT:	DATE RECEIVED:
CITY CLERK	SR 8/7/2020
CITY ATTORNEY	

(Use additional sheets as necessary)

*Tina Katsanos*

RECEIVED

AUG 7 2020



CHARLOTTE

# Complaint Form

Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements

OFFICE OF CITY CLERK

TODAY'S DATE: Aug 9, 2020

THIS COMPLAINT IS PERTAINING TO (Please check one): A separate form must be completed for each complaint.

THE MAYOR AND/ OR A COUNCIL MEMBER OR \_\_\_\_\_ A MEMBER OF A BOARD, COMMITTEE OR COMMISSION

**1. PERSON FILING THE COMPLAINT:**

FULL NAME: Jada A. McKenzie-Burns <sup>AKA</sup> Jada X Swanson

ADDRESS: 8504 Dahlia Drive Apt 104

CITY, STATE & ZIP CODE: Charlotte, NC 28213

HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ WORK PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE: (336) 306-3972

**2. PERSON ALLEGED TO HAVE COMMITTEED AN UNETHICAL ACT:**

Councilman Toriy Balkhari

**3. ETHICS PROVISION VIOLATED: (List the chapter names, sections and, sub-sections, if applicable)**

Charlotte City Charter Article 4 Section 8.101

**4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT: (State with specificity the facts that form the basis of your complaint)**

Councilman Toriy Balkhari "directly or indirectly" attempted to "become an independent contractor for work

4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1:

done by the city" when his  
non profit organization Carolina  
Fintech Hub expressed interest  
into the contract between  
the City of Charlotte, which  
indirectly serves his self interest,  
Bakheri's actions led to public  
deception and for non disclosure  
with failure to disclose his  
organization's involvement  
and participation until  
after the matter was brought  
to the attention of the public,

therefore I am asking for formal investigation  
to be conducted regarding this matter.

Jala A. McKezzie Burns AKA Jala X. Jackson  
SIGNATURE

Jala A. McKezzie-Burns  
PRINT NAME AKA Jala X. Jackson

August 7, 2020  
DATE

FOR OFFICIAL USE:	
DEPARTMENT:	DATE RECEIVED:
CITY CLERK	SCR 8/7/2020
CITY ATTORNEY	_____

(Use additional sheets as necessary)

RECEIVED

AUG 10 2020



# Complaint Form

OFFICE OF CITY CLERK

## Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements

TODAY'S DATE: August 10, 2020

THIS COMPLAINT IS PERTAINING TO (Please check one): *A separate form must be completed for each complaint.*

THE MAYOR AND/ OR A COUNCIL MEMBER **OR**  A MEMBER OF A BOARD, COMMITTEE OR COMMISSION

**1. PERSON FILING THE COMPLAINT:**

FULL NAME: Michael F. Roessler

ADDRESS: 135 West Morehead Street, Apartment 210

CITY, STATE & ZIP CODE: Charlotte, N.C. 28202

HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ WORK PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE: 704-661-9032

**2. PERSON ALLEGED TO HAVE COMMITTEED AN UNETHICAL ACT:**

Councilman Tariq S. Bokhari

**3. ETHICS PROVISION VIOLATED:** (List the chapter names, sections and, sub-sections, if applicable)

Section 3.a. of the Code of Ethics for the Mayor and City Council,  
specifically that provision that prohibits officials from using their official  
positions for personal gain.

**4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT:** (State with specificity the facts that form the basis of your complaint)

Councilman Bokhari has engaged in a years-long practice of using his public  
office to further his private financial interests. See attached, which is incorporated  
by reference and may be reviewed with supporting hyperlinks at charlottecitizen.com.

**4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1:**

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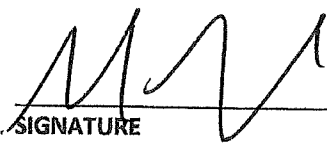
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\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

Michael F. Roessler  
\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT NAME

August 10, 2020  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

FOR OFFICIAL USE:	
DEPARTMENT:	DATE RECEIVED:
CITY CLERK	<i>GR 8/10/2020</i>
CITY ATTORNEY	_____

(Use additional sheets as necessary)

## **In Plain Sight: A Councilman's Corruption**

Michael F. Roessler

What's most remarkable about Tariq Bokhari's corruption is how long it went unnoticed.

While the media and other elected officials only recently began to scrutinize the Charlotte city councilman's merger of his private-sector work with his public duties, Bokhari's entire time in office has been one, long advertisement for himself, his industry in general, and his employer in particular, much to his own benefit.

Here's how it's worked:

Around the time Bokhari was to once again vie for public office in 2017, he positioned himself as an up-and-coming member of the so-called fintech industry. ("Fintech" is the label that self-consciously cutting-edge business types have assigned to companies that do IT work in the financial services industry.)

The councilman's efforts to brand himself as a player in the field landed him a gig that year as the executive director of Carolina Fintech Hub (CFH), a non-profit he co-founded that is dedicated to promoting the fintech industry in Charlotte and is funded by a number of businesses, including Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Ally, Barings, AIG, Truist, and Ernst & Young. (Bokhari recently went so far as to say, "Those companies are the Fintech Hub. It's just a non-profit venture of them all.") As he explained in 2019, CFH is like a mini-chamber of commerce for Charlotte fintech.

Now, at the same time Bokhari was founding and building his fintech advocacy group, he ran for and won public office, in part, on a platform of promoting Charlotte as a place for fintech companies to set up shop. Once elected, he carried that message with him into office.

Work by Bokhari-the-city-councilman to promote Charlotte as a fintech destination has thus benefitted Bokhari-the-executive-director-of-CFH, which, at last check, paid him an annual salary of \$200,000 to act as a booster for the fintech industry, the very same work he has prioritized in public office.



Under this arrangement, as the fintech industry in Charlotte grows, thanks in part to efforts by Bokhari-the-public-servant to promote the city as a place for such companies, so grows the work to be done by CFH, the programs to be implemented by CFH, the number of companies supporting CFH, and the revenues collected by CFH. And as CFH's fortunes rise, so do those of its executive director, Bokhari, who can point to the increased size and work of CFH as a mark of his managerial success, justifying the retention of his well-paying job (in addition, of course, to regular salary increases so his compensation remains commensurate with other, similarly-sized organizations).

So while recent questions about a particular CFH program's potential receipt of city funds are worthy of asking, they miss the point: a bigger conflict has been ongoing for years, one that Bokhari has made no effort to hide but that everyone somehow didn't notice.

Perhaps it was those years of impunity that animated Bokhari's response to finally being called out last month, reacting indignantly and casting blame on those who questioned his conflicts of interest. Indeed, if Bokhari sincerely believes he's done nothing wrong by commingling his private financial interests with his work as a holder of the public trust, his offense at recent questions makes sense. And he quite clearly believes he's done no wrong.

After questions about a conflict first came to light last month, Bokhari wrote an email to his council colleagues forthrightly acknowledging that he's spent the last several years presenting himself both to his constituents and to his potential benefactors and business partners as a package deal, one part public servant and one part private-sector entrepreneur. He used the word "synergistic" to describe the merger of his private financial interests with his duties as an elected official.

There is, though, a better word to describe it, a more solid word, a word that cuts through any obfuscation and captures the essence of Bokhari's behavior — even if he doesn't understand it, and we for too long failed to see it: corruption.

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Let's start where the recent questions started, deep in the bowels of city bureaucracy at a July 14, 2020, meeting of the Small Business Task Force.

The city established the task force to plan the expenditure of \$50 million in federal CARES Act money awarded to Charlotte as a result of the pandemic. In addition to Bokhari, Mayor Pro Tem Julie Eiselt, Councilman James Mitchell, and Councilman Dimple Ajmera sat on the committee.

Throughout May and June, the task force identified a number of funding priorities, including the allocation of \$1.5 million to a public-private partnership that would provide software development training to ninety people, along with living stipends to the participants during the five-month training period and job commitments for them at the training's conclusion.

That's where the trouble started: The "private" half of the proposed partnership was to be CFH, Bokhari's fintech advocacy group.

None of the \$1.5 million in city money was to go directly to CFH. Rather, those dollars would have been paid to the program's participants as their stipends, each trainee receiving approximately \$16,667 over the course of the training.

Although CFH wasn't going to get any of the city money, other task force members expressed concern that an organization co-founded and run by a council member was going to be involved with a project that was to get city money. Eiselt expressed a desire for everything to be done "above board"; task force member DeAlva Wilson, who chairs the city's business advisory committee, said she thought the questions about CFH were "fair"; Ajmera reminded everyone that council members owe a fiduciary duty to the public.

Bokhari was defensive and unmoved. When asked if CFH leadership would receive any compensation from the public funds, he responded, "That question doesn't even compute or make sense to me." He later said he thought the entire discussion was baseless: "The question is irrelevant because there are no city dollars going to" CFH.

From Bokhari's perspective, deploying public dollars in support of CFH's training program was a no-brainer. Programs like it, he said, were all about "leveraging opportunities as the private sector presents itself" and "capitalizing on private-sector opportunities as they arise."

A similar theme appeared in the email Bokhari wrote to colleagues after the task force meeting.

Bokhari claimed that City Manager Marcus Jones “personally asked me to help design the City of Charlotte’s economic recovery plan given my pre-existing involvement with and ability to quickly mobilize the private sector in the areas of small business support and workforce development.” This was a sort of confession, acknowledging that for Bokhari, his public and private work are one.

Then came the real confession, even if Bokhari didn’t understand it as such: “I had always viewed my nonprofit work and City work as synergistic but totally separate hats to avoid even the perception of an issue, but given the ask and the nature of this crisis, I decided this work was necessary despite the significant effort it would entail for my organization.”

“Leveraging” private-sector opportunities. “Capitalizing” on those opportunities. And seeking out “synergistic” relationships.

Bokhari was telling us what he’s been doing all along.

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It started about three years ago.

Before that, Bokhari seems to have charted a typical path for a Charlotte professional, working in risk management for a bank and at a financial services firm. (He also ran unsuccessfully for city council in 2007 and 2009 and later served on the city’s business advisory committee.)

In early 2017, Bokhari seems to have made the decision to brand himself as a member of the local fintech vanguard.

Part of that work came in the form of Aggressant, Inc., a company he co-founded in March 2017 that marketed itself as “makers of innovative apps that creatively solve real-world problems” as a result of possessing “a passion for building at the intersection of technology and real life experience.” The company’s flagship project — its only project, it seems — was to be an app called PFM Hero, “a social game that improves your finances.”

The founding of Aggressant would later serve as the basis for local media describing Bokhari as having “launched his own financial technology company.” He would use similar language on his campaign website. To this day, Aggressant is listed on Bokhari’s LinkedIn page as a going concern.

Except it's not, nor does it appear to have ever been much more than a dream and a barebones website.

The company was incorporated in March 2017 when a LegalZoom incorporator filed articles of incorporation with the North Carolina Secretary of State. No other filings were ever made by or on behalf of the company. The Secretary of State's office notified Aggressor in March 2019 that its annual filing was overdue. When there was no response from the company, the Secretary of State administratively dissolved Aggressor in June 2019. It no longer exists.

As for PFM Hero, its website is little more than an advertisement for an undeveloped, unfinished product. (The only real content on the site are links to city-related podcasts that Bokhari-the-councilman records every week with fellow councilman Larken Egleston.) The app appears in neither the Apple nor Android store. The only other on-line signs of PFM Hero are funding pitches on various sites intended to help connect start-ups with potential backers.

Even though Aggressor and PFM Hero seemingly went nowhere, and even if it's more fantasy than reality to say Bokhari "launched his own financial technology company," he had found his niche. He was going to be one of the faces of the emerging fintech industry in Charlotte.

Around this time, then-Mayor Jennifer Roberts launched a fintech initiative with the goal of making Charlotte a hub for financial technology and innovation. Roberts explained that the initiative was charged with developing a plan to brand and market the city as such. CFH would emerge from this effort.

In the summer of 2017, a number of private-sector companies began to build CFH. Bokhari was identified at that time as a "local entrepreneur" who was working with the group "on an interim basis." The same article noted, "Bokhari is also running as a Republican for City Council this year."

Having been dually identified as a fintech advocate and an aspiring public official, Bokhari extolled the virtues of fintech, explaining that the organization's aim was "boosting the fintech ecosystem."

Meanwhile, similar themes were playing out on Bokhari's campaign website. Charlotte needed job creation, he wrote, but not just any job creation:

We need to focus on becoming a global FinTech (Financial Technology) hub. FinTech's role in the financial industry will not only continue to grow over the next 10 years, it is predicted to do so at the expense of traditional banking jobs. As the 3rd largest banking center in the nation, Charlotte has a lot to gain by proactively addressing this opportunity.

Bokhari, too, had a lot to gain. As part of the fintech industry, his efforts as a candidate for public office to tout the industry could certainly be expected to redound to his own, private benefit. The commingling of private interest and public work thus commenced as early as the 2017 campaign.

On September 12, 2017, Bokhari squeaked out a victory in the GOP primary, virtually guaranteeing him a seat on city council representing his heavily Republican district.

Then, about a week after the primary, Bokhari and others formally created CFH by filing papers with the North Carolina Secretary of State. Bokhari was installed as CFH's executive director.

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The general election was an anti-climax.

The Charlotte Observer endorsed Bokhari, noting he had "launched his own financial technology company," a reference to the mostly fictitious Aggressant. On Election Day, Bokhari collected nearly 63% of ballots cast. He was sworn in to office in December.

From his spot on city council, the practice of mingling his private interests with his public service took off.

Whether in news coverage or industry advertisements or conference announcements or on his own social media accounts, Bokhari's identity as a city councilman and his identity as a paid, private-sector advocate for fintech weren't only merged, but fused.

His biography on the city's website describes him as "an influential leader in the financial technology (fintech) industry" and identifies him as the executive director of CFH. (The bio also states Bokhari "launch[ed] his own start-up company," a reference to the defunct Aggressant.)

When moderating panels about the future of fintech in Charlotte, he was identified both as the executive director of CFH and a city councilman. So, too, when he was a panelist during such discussions.

The same happened when he joined other non-profit boards.

And distinguishing Bokhari-the-councilman from Bokhari-the fintech-industry-advocate was impossible when the discussion turned to economic development.

When in January 2018, shortly after Bokhari joined city council, Amazon eliminated Charlotte as a potential home for the company's second headquarters, Bokhari said the bidding process itself had been valuable because it would help lure other companies to town in the future. But who was talking there, the councilman with a duty to consider the public good exclusively or the head of a private organization that, without regard to the public good, would no doubt always welcome new fintech companies to town — along with their potential financial backing of CFH?

That very tension played itself out in one news story after Amazon's announcement.

When the company took a pass on Charlotte, some community members expressed relief. If Amazon had come to town, they said, its presence would have exacerbated problems like income inequality. That's precisely the sort of public consideration an elected official has a duty to examine when making decisions on behalf of the people.

Bokhari dismissed it, concluding that landing Amazon would have been "game-changing enough that it's worth taking on that pain." It's impossible to avoid the conclusion that when Bokhari rendered this judgment as a councilman, he was unavoidably and significantly influenced by his paid, private-sector role pitching Charlotte as a fintech hub.

Bokhari expressed no concerns about such conflicts.

In the wake of Amazon cutting Charlotte from consideration, Bokhari wrote an op-ed in which he lauded the possibility of landing Apple's next headquarters. The piece identified Bokhari as a city councilman. So here was a public official, in his official capacity, touting an economic development project that would benefit him personally if it were to happen — for it's beyond question that if Apple came to town, numerous

fintech companies would follow in its wake. And who would be there to encourage all those companies to join the self-styled mini-chamber of commerce for such enterprises? Bokhari, of course, who is paid by the private sector to do so.

On and on it went, Bokhari-the-elected-official promoting the interests of Bokhari-the-paid-fintech-advocate, whose stated goal was to continue to grow and expand his employer's fortunes and, therefore, his own — something that would certainly benefit from Bokhari's fintech promotional work on city council.

When BB&T and SunTrust announced their merger in February 2019, there was Bokhari, identified as both a councilman and executive director of CFH, celebrating that the merger would result in the company locating a lab for new banking technology in Charlotte. Bokhari said it would help the city attract fintech start-ups, the kinds of businesses whose addition to Charlotte would benefit Bokhari as executive director of CFH, the mini-chamber for such companies.

When Lowe's announced in June 2019 that it would locate a tech center in Charlotte, there was Bokhari, identified as both a councilman and executive director of CFH, explaining that the company had expressed an interest in contributing to the development of workforce development programs — like CFH's own Workforce Investment Network. Another win for CFH and the man at its helm.

When online mortgage company Better.com announced in September 2019 that it would bring 1,000 jobs to Charlotte, there was Bokhari, identified as a councilman and executive director of CFH, celebrating the announcement. The company, of course, is exactly the kind of business CFH can reasonably be expected to approach about striking up a partnership, which would benefit Bokhari's own business and financial interests.

And when Microsoft announced in October 2019 that it was bringing 430 jobs to the city, there was Bokhari, again identified as both a councilman and CFH's executive director, talking about how it was getting easier to recruit tech companies — the kinds of companies he and his employer represent, cultivate, and solicit: "The more examples we can point to ... the less of a lift it is to convince the next person." Who, though, was that "we?" It was, of course, Bokhari the public servant *and* Bokhari the privately paid advocate.

Shortly after Microsoft's announcement, it was time for Bokhari to run for reelection.

His campaign website touted his credentials as a fintech advocate, claiming that he "led business recruitment effort to bring 1000's of new tech jobs to Charlotte." The site also continued to push the importance of attracting fintech to Charlotte. Meanwhile, news coverage of the election described Bokhari as executive director of CFH, and an endorsement from the Observer pointed to Bokhari's "experience in the growing financial technology sector."

Bokhari won reelection in November 2019.

In January 2020, Bokhari was to travel to Paris with city and CFH officials for an economic development trip, where he was hoping to meet representatives of three-dozen fintech companies. Just as he did at home, while abroad Bokhari intended to simultaneously act as a public official and as an advocate for a particular private-sector industry, one that pays him handsomely to do its work. (Bokhari's pay, by the way, increased from approximately \$133,000 a year when CFH was founded in 2017 to \$200,000 in 2018, the latest year for which IRS filings are available. That's in addition to his roughly \$20,000 salary as a councilman.)

Not long after the planned Paris trip, COVID-19 hit, which would eventually result in the proposed jobs-training program that exposed Bokhari's conflicts of interest.

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After the small business task force flagged the proposed CFH program because of concerns about conflicts of interest, city council took up the issue at its meeting on July 27, 2020.

Really, there were two conversations that night.

The less important conversation was about the law and was led by City Attorney Patrick Baker.

He explained that in light of the questions surrounding the potential use of city money to help fund the CFH jobs-training program, he examined whether the proposal would violate either of two legal provisions.

First, he considered a state criminal statute that makes it illegal for a public official to derive a "direct benefit" from a contract between him and a public agency. In



this case, there was to be no contract between either Bokhari or CFH and the city, so there would be no such violation if the program continued as planned, Baker concluded.

Second, he asked whether the proposed arrangement would violate a provision in the city charter that makes it a misdemeanor for a council member to become an independent contractor of the city. Again, because there was to be no contract between either Bokhari or CFH and the city, Baker found this provision would not be violated.

These seem like reasonable, and correct, answers to the legal questions.

But the legal questions aren't the important questions, as some council members recognized, and that brings us to the second conversation city council had that night.

"This is about transparency, accountability, public trust, and the good stewardship of public dollars," Councilwoman Ajmera said.

In other words, this was a matter of right and wrong, something not to be answered by lawyers researching statutes, but by the people themselves, and their representatives, resorting to political ethics.

Councilwoman Renee Johnson understood, too, observing that CFH would benefit from the partially publicly-funded jobs program, the benefit coming in the form of renown: "Any organization whose participants are paid almost \$3,000 a month are going to have a line of people to attend." Successfully training those participants would be another feather in CFH's cap, something else to place in its marketing materials as Bokhari, its executive director, makes the rounds to solicit businesses and drum up funding.

Braxton Winston, an at-large councilman, also got it: "This is a question of governance. This is a question of ethics. Staff does not control that. The North Carolina General Assembly does not control that. Our attorney does not control that."

For these council members and others, the problem seemed obvious: a company co-founded and run by a fellow councilman was to be a beneficiary of city dollars, even if only indirectly by way of the sorts of reputational benefits that businesses and organizations can parlay into more publicity, more opportunities, more membership, and more revenue. As Councilman Victoria Watlington observed, "If nobody can figure out that that's free publicity for Fintech Hub, I don't know what to tell you."

She was right, of course, except to the degree she thought the campaign of free publicity for CFH — and all the benefits that flow to it and Bokhari as a result — only began last month; as we've seen, it's been happening for years.

Council members' judgment that the proposed deal with CFH would have been wrong, even if not illegal, finds support in the code of ethics that binds Charlotte's elected officials. The code compels members to "avoid impropriety in the exercise of their official duties" and prohibits them from "us[ing] their official position for personal gain." As to not only the jobs-training program in particular, but, more importantly, his council work pushing fintech in general, what judgment can be honestly reached but that Bokhari — for years, and in plain sight — has personally gained from his advocacy, as a city councilman, for the industry whose mini-chamber of commerce he is paid to run?

The code of ethics requires council members to file an annual Statement of Economic Interest form. One of the things to be disclosed is whether a member had served in the previous year as an employee of any non-profit organization whose financial interests "may be substantially or materially affected, in a manner distinguishable from the public generally, by the performance or nonperformance of your official duties." Disclosing such information allows the public to assess whether elected officials are running afoul of the requirement that they not use their official position for personal gain.

In his 2019 and 2020 filings, Bokhari reported that while he is the executive director of CFH, his role in that organization does not meet any criteria requiring disclosure, though he said he was making the disclosure for the sake of complete transparency. But Bokhari's public advocacy for fintech, which affects, and is affected by, his well-paying, private-sector job as a champion of fintech, means he is simply wrong about this. Every time Bokhari steps into the public square and plays the part of fintech advocate from the city council dias, CFH's financial interests — and, along with it, his own financial interests — are undeniably affected by the performance of his official duties

How can he not see that? How have *we* not seen that?

Perhaps the glitter of a hip, twenty-first-century label like “fintech” has distracted us from the obvious. So let’s consider an earthier hypothetical: booze.

Suppose a city resident believed that attracting spirit manufacturers would be good for the city’s economic future. He starts working with a small, but growing number of people who think likewise. Our man becomes this group’s public face, and a number of these individuals get together, form a non-profit organization to promote the city as a good home for alcohol manufacturers, and name our man its executive director. In this private-sector role, his responsibility is to market the city as a good place to make booze, and he gets well-paid to do so. In essence, the organization becomes a mini-chamber of commerce for alcohol manufacturers.

Now, suppose our guy also decides to run for city council around the same time he and his supporters establish this mini-chamber of commerce, and one of the primary planks in his platform is for the city to work to lure more alcohol manufacturers to town. He wins, and then commences a years-long campaign, from his seat in public office, extolling the virtues of luring spirit manufacturers to town — all while continuing to work and be well-paid by the alcohol manufacturer’s mini-chamber of commerce, whose membership and coffers may grow every time the city’s effort are successful and another booze manufacturer starts production in the city.

The conflict could not be clearer: this man would be using his public office to promote his own private financial interests by acting, in his official capacity, as a hooch salesman. Replace alcohol with fintech, and this is a fair description of Bokhari’s actions.

While discussing the proposed CFH jobs-training program, many city council members seemed to understand this was the inappropriate dynamic at play, though none seemed to recognize just how long it’s been going on. One council member, though, didn’t get it: Bokhari, who simultaneously cast himself as victim, savior, blackmailer, and promoter.

He accused colleagues who questioned his conflicts of interest as being motivated by nothing but a raw desire to “punish an occasionally unlikeable colleague.” He had previously said something similar, accusing colleagues who criticized the CFH

program of retaliating against him for his support of the police during earlier council debates over reform of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department.

He tried out the role of savior by saying that a decision to cut city funding for the CFH jobs-training program would only harm those who were to receive the training. "Please, I'm begging you. Don't hurt these people," he pleaded.

Bokhari also turned to a form of political extortion, observing ominously, "The private sector is watching the actions of this body very closely right now, and they are both confused and concerned." He added that the private sector may well be asking itself, "Is it worth it to enter into public-private partnerships any more?" These concerns by business, Bokhari warned, could affect the city's ability to tackle issues like affordable housing and economic mobility. This was basically a ransom note: Leave CFH alone or else.

After city council voted to abandon the CFH program, Bokhari returned to the role he's honed over the years, that of pitchman for CFH from his seat in public office. When city council voted to abandon the CFH program, it also directed the Workforce and Business Development Committee, which was to meet the next day, to explore alternatives to the program. The committee's meeting gave Bokhari a chance, in his official capacity as an elected official, to lecture his colleagues about how CFH's jobs-training program is "one of a kind" and "the only one like it." It would be a "fool's errand," he said, to ask city staff to find an equivalent replacement. These remarks by Bokhari-the-city-councilman were nothing but a commercial for CFH.

Even after all the publicity and criticism and rancor about his conflicts of interest, Bokhari still didn't get it.

That continues to be the case.

On August 6, Bokhari posted a Twitter thread threatening legal action against Councilwoman Ajmera because she said that when Bokhari's allies with the North Carolina Republican Party filed an ethics complaint against her, they were merely trying to deflect criticism away from Bokhari's ethical lapses by accusing her of such breaches. Ajmera had libeled him, he said, because the city attorney had reviewed Bokhari's actions as they related to CFH's potential receipt of public money and concluded his "actions were free of ethical or conflict of interest issues," Bokhari wrote.

Bokhari still thinks it's about the law: He didn't commit a crime, so there's nothing to see here.

\*\*\*\*\*

Is that really all we can expect of our representatives, that they not be criminals? Surely we have a right to demand more. As such, the law is an ancillary concern, and our paramount consideration ought to be ethics, whether someone has behaved badly. In a word, our concern ought to be corruption.

We too often think of corruption as differing little from criminality generally or bribery particularly, the outright selling of official acts or votes for money or other things of value. That's too narrow.

Historically, America has embraced an expansive view of corruption, one that arose from the Founders' belief that self-government requires virtuous citizens for its proper functioning. For them, the definition of corruption was simple: It's using public power for private ends. As one scholar has described it, "While political virtue is pursuing the public good in public life, political corruption is using public life for private gain."

Importantly, behavior needn't be prohibited by the criminal law to count as corruption.

When we look beyond illegality, Bokhari's corruption is both clear and long-standing: He has engaged in a years-long pattern and practice of using his public office to promote the local fintech industry, the very industry that, in exchange for a generous salary, employs him to act as its promoter. This arrangement is, as Bokhari mentioned in the general context of public-private partnerships, a fine example of him "leveraging" and "capitalizing on" private-sector opportunities from his seat on city council.

This is exactly the sort of behavior that lay at the roots of corruption as historically understood in America. It is corruption.

Perhaps Bokhari thinks no real harm has been done because any personal benefit he has received as a result of his city-connected lobbying for the fintech industry has been accompanied by a larger benefit to the community in the form of jobs and tax revenue and opportunities for upward mobility.

This will not do. It is no answer to the charge of corruption that its benefits trickle down to other, innocent parties.

At core, the problem is as Bokhari himself recognized in another context.

When the the Charlotte Chamber and the Charlotte Regional Partnership merged in 2019 as part of an effort to overhaul the region's economic development efforts, there was concern among some officials, including Bokhari, that the mission of recruiting business to Charlotte using city tax dollars would be in tension with a more regional approach to economic development.

"I do not know how you can fairly serve multiple masters," he observed at the time.

You can't, of course. Nor can he.

Bokhari needs to choose between the public trust and his private financial interests. It can't be both. The corruption must end.

RECEIVED

AUG 15 2020

OFFICE OF CITY CLERK



# Complaint Form

## Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements

TODAY'S DATE: 08/06/20

THIS COMPLAINT IS PERTAINING TO (Please check one): *A separate form must be completed for each complaint.*

THE MAYOR AND/ OR A COUNCIL MEMBER OR  A MEMBER OF A BOARD, COMMITTEE OR COMMISSION

**1. PERSON FILING THE COMPLAINT:**

FULL NAME: Corine Mack  
ADDRESS: 2317 Sonoma Valley Drive  
CITY, STATE & ZIP CODE: Charlotte NC 28214  
HOME PHONE: 7049000756 WORK PHONE: 347-683-0264 CELL PHONE: 347-683-0264

**2. PERSON ALLEGED TO HAVE COMMITTEED AN UNETHICAL ACT:**

Councilmember Tariq Bokhari

**3. ETHICS PROVISION VIOLATED:** (List the chapter names, sections and, sub-sections, if applicable)

Charlotte Code of Ethics A:Section 2, 3a, 4 and  
C: Disclosure Requirements . Charlotte Code of Ordinances IV  
Section 8.101

**4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT:** (State with specificity the facts that form the basis of your complaint)

My belief is it is unethical for Marcus Jones to choose Tariq Bokhari to

my belief is it is unethical for Marcus Jones to choose Cary Bokhari to receive city monies while seated as a councilperson. It is unethical for Mr. Bokhari to accept. The council was not aware and did not vote on it

Page 1 of 2

4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1:

The decision to give Carolina Fintech 1.5 million dollars violates the code of ethics because as the Founder and executive director, Bokhari directly and indirectly gains. The opportunity for this funding should have been open to the public, specifically Black lead organizations as we are addressing Black inequities and discrimination. It appears Mr. Jones and Mr. Bokhari intentionally kept the fact that Carolina Fintech was chosen until the last moment. The majority of councilmembers stated they were not aware which means there was not a vote approving the decision by council. This action is egregious and creates greater distrust between the council and the residents of Charlotte, particularly the Black and Brown communities. Charlotte has been 50th for Black upward mobility, giving Black lead organizations would have made a huge difference.

Black organizations are held at a different standard for funding

*Corine Mack*

SIGNATURE

Corine Mack

PRINT NAME

FOR OFFICIAL USE:

DEPARTMENT:

DATE RECEIVED:

8/16/2020 *SK*





# Complaint Form

## *Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements*

TODAY'S DATE: 08/16/2020

**THIS COMPLAINT IS PERTAINING TO (Please check one):** *A separate form must be completed for each complaint.*

THE MAYOR AND/ OR A COUNCIL MEMBER **OR**  A MEMBER OF A BOARD, COMMITTEE OR COMMISSION

### 1. PERSON FILING THE COMPLAINT:

FULL NAME: Brandon T Forbes

ADDRESS: 3726 Providence Rd

CITY, STATE & ZIP CODE: Charlotte, NC 28211

HOME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ WORK PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE: (980) 267-1150

### 2. PERSON ALLEGED TO HAVE COMMITTEED AN UNETHICAL ACT:

Tariq Bokhari

### 3. ETHICS PROVISION VIOLATED: (List the chapter names, sections and, sub-sections, if applicable)

Ethics Policy Violation of Section 3a: Using their position for personal gain

### 4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT: (State with specificity the facts that form the basis of your complaint)

Over the last 4 years Tariq Bokhari has used his official position, particularly in rezoning cases, to  
directly engage with those from the real estate community who have business in front of the Council  
to solicit campaign contributions. The timing of contributions made to him, many off typical campaign

**4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1:**

fundraising cycles, directly correlates to his votes on rezoning petitions, and demonstrates a clear need  
for the City to engage an independent investigator, validate this complaint is meritorious, and take the  
appropriate legal action to restore confidence in what is seemingly a corrupt system. This is about  
transparency, accountability, and good stewardship.

See the Supplemental Document attached for supporting evidence.

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Brandon Forbes, Esq  
**SIGNATURE**

Brandon T Forbes  
**PRINT NAME**

08/16/2020  
**DATE**

FOR OFFICIAL USE:	
DEPARTMENT:	DATE RECEIVED:
CITY CLERK	_____
CITY ATTORNEY	_____

(Use additional sheets as necessary)

August 16, 2020

Stephanie C. Kelly  
Charlotte City Clerk  
600 East 4th St  
7th Floor  
Charlotte, NC 28202

RE: Supplemental Document for Tariq Bokhari Ethics Violation Complaint

Supporting Evidence - Notable Donations, Timings

1. The Apartment Association of NC gave \$500.00 on October 10, 2017.
2. Mr. Edward Currant, associated with Norwood Development, LLC, gave \$500.00 on October 10, 2017. Rezoning petition 2019-115 was placed on the agenda and Mr. Bokhair voted Yea June 15, 2020.
3. The North Carolina Realtors PAC gave \$5,200.00 on October 10, 2017.
4. Mr. Damon Hemmerdinger gave \$1,000.00 on November 21, 2018. An associated petition, 2017-054, was approved September 18, 2017.
5. Mr. Peter A. Pappas gave \$250.00 on May 01, 2019.
6. Mr. Stephen Rosenberg gave \$1,000.00 on May 1, 2019.
7. Mr. John Harris gave \$500.00 on August 19, 2019.
8. The North Carolina Realtors PAC gave \$2,000.00 on August 19, 2019.
9. The North Carolina Realtors PAC gave \$500.00 on October 1, 2019.
10. Mr. Tim Sittema gave \$1,000.00 on October 1, 2019. Associated petition 2020-027 Crossland Southeast was approved June 15, 2020.
11. The North Carolina Realtors PAC gave \$4,000.00 on October 20, 2019. Associated petition 2019-161 by Crescent Communities, LLC, was approved March, 16, 2020.
12. Mr. Bart Hopper, associated with Hopper Communities, gave \$500.00 on December 1, 2019. Rezoning petitions approved: 2019-153 approved September 2019, 2019-076 approved in October 2019, and 2018-117 approved November 2019.

RECEIVED

AUG 18 2020



Complaint Form OFFICE OF CITY CLERK

Code of Ethics, Gift Policy, and Disclosure Requirements

TODAY'S DATE: August 17th, 2020

THIS COMPLAINT IS PERTAINING TO (Please check one): A separate form must be completed for each complaint.

X THE MAYOR AND/ OR A COUNCIL MEMBER OR A MEMBER OF A BOARD, COMMITTEE OR COMMISSION

1. PERSON FILING THE COMPLAINT:

FULL NAME: Maya Ocean wells

ADDRESS: 8853 Driftwood Commons Court

CITY, STATE & ZIP CODE: Charlotte, NC, 28227

HOME PHONE: WORK PHONE: CELL PHONE: 704-232-5614

2. PERSON ALLEGED TO HAVE COMMITTEED AN UNETHICAL ACT:

Julie Eiselt

3. ETHICS PROVISION VIOLATED: (List the chapter names, sections and, sub-sections, if applicable)

Ethics Policy Violation of Section 3A: Using one's official position for personal gain

4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT: (State with specificity the facts that form the basis of your complaint)

Over the last five years, Julie Eiselt has been influenced in her decision making as MPT & City Council Member At-Large by

4. REASON FOR COMPLAINT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1:

real estate ~~developers~~ developers. In particular, she has been rewarded by her real estate donors for approval of rezoning cases, especially controversial decisions where she voted in favor of real estate development over the needs of everyday community members. She has saluted campaign donations from businesses & developers that have brought their business needs in front of Charlotte City Council. This behavior demonstrates a clear need for independent investigation.

Maya Wells  
SIGNATURE

Maya Wells  
PRINT NAME

08/17/2020  
DATE

FOR OFFICIAL USE:	
DEPARTMENT:	DATE RECEIVED:
CITY CLERK	<u>SLR 8/18/2020</u>
CITY ATTORNEY	_____

(Use additional sheets as necessary)

8/17/2020

Stephanie C. Kelly

Charlotte City Clerk

600 East Fourth St., 7<sup>th</sup> Floor

Charlotte NC 28202

Attn: Supplemental Document for Julie Eislet Ethics Violation Complaint

Supporting Data – Suspect Donations and Suspect Timings

Abstract:

Since taking office Julie Eiselt has consistently used her position for monetary gain, most notably on record in the form of campaign donations. Many of her development and re-zoning, decisions in her official capacity as a Charlotte City Council member at large and mayor pro-temp benefit her donors, and regularly harm disenfranchised communities. Eislet consistently votes in favor of controversial development projects which harm these communities. Case in point is her decision to vote in favor of 2019-055 for Movement Resources, a vocal anti-LGBTQ entity. The timing of how she votes in favor of policies and re-zoning ordinances reveal a systemic pattern of corruption. I am asking for an investigation into the ethics of Julie Eislet and would suggest a sub-poena for her financial statements, including her personal bank accounts. Lastly, Eiselt is a frequent beneficiary of real estate developer PACs.

*The following data is organized by City Council person's, Julie Eislet's , development approvals and the vested interests on the part of her donors:*

### **Eiselt approved Re-zoning Petition 2017-186**

#### **Campaign Donors with Vested Interests in 2017-186**

##### **Bobby Drakeford, CEO of the Drakeford Company**

The Drakeford company specializes in multi-family use development and land assemblages for multi use development. <https://www.tdcrealestate.com/team>

##### **Bobby Drakeford's contributions to Julie Eiselt's campaign fund:**

7/17/2017 \$250.00

06/21/2019 \$200.00

**Total: \$450.00**

**W. Clay Grubb, CEO of Grubb Properties**

Grubb Properties “offers a wide range of expertise in property management, development, and construction” <https://www.grubbproperties.com/about>

**W. Clay Grubb’s contributions to Julie Eiselt’s campaign fund:**

7/25/2017 \$500.00

05/20/2019 \$250.00

**Total: \$750.00**

**May 2020: Anthony Fox’s Proposal to not use City Funds for American Airlines if they provide health benefits for the unionized employees. Eislet supported Fox on this.**

**Campaign Donors with Vested Interests with this representation:**

**Anthony Fox**

10/23/2017 \$500.00

11/10/2017 \$500.00

8/28/2019 \$250.00

**Total: \$1,250.00**

**Eiselt Approved Re-zoning Petition 2019-115**

**Campaign Donors with Vested Interests**

**Commercial Real Estate Development PAC**

CRED PAC’s contributions to Julie Eiselt’s campaign fund:

10/28/2019 \$500.00

**Total: \$500.00**

**Edward Curran, CEO of the Bissel Companies**

Northwood Office was established Northwood Investors, LLC – a privately-held, global real estate investment and management firm – to provide a complete approach to fulfilling office space needs. In March 2017, Northwood Investors acquired most of the Ballantyne interests of The Bissell Companies, one of the Southeast’s most prominent developers of successful mixed-use communities. <https://www.northwoodoffice.com/about/>

**Edward Curran’s contributions to Julie Eiselt’s campaign fund:**

05/31/2017 \$300.00

10/24/2019 \$400.00

**Total: \$700.00**

**Roy Goode, CEO Goode Properties**

Goode Properties is a real estate development company.  
<https://www.wbtv.com/story/26513119/developer-seeks-rezoning-for-60m-mixed-use-project-near-metropolitan/>

**Roy Goode’s contributions to Julie Eislet’s campaign fund:**

9/6/2017 \$500.00

5/21/2019 \$250.00

9/19/2019 \$1,000.00

**Total: \$1,750.00**

**Eiselt Approved 2020-27 Crosland Southeast**

**Campaign Donors with Vested Interests:**

**NC Realtors PAC**

09/16/2019 \$1,000.00

10/18/2019 \$2,000.00

10/25/2019 \$2,000.00



**Total: \$5, 000.00**

**Peter Pappas**

Peter Pappas is former partner with The Harris Group after starting his career with **The Bissell Companies**, Pappas has developed, marketed and managed numerous noteworthy projects including Michelin's North American Headquarters, Ballantyne, Morrocroft and 330 South Tryon. In addition to his work at Terwilliger Pappas he is CEO and founder of Pappas Properties, a firm nationally renowned for its mixed-use development work.

**Peter Pappas' Contributions to Julie Eislet's Campaign Fund:**

10/04/2017 \$500.00

10/23/2017 \$500.00

6/19/2019 \$500.00

9/26/2019 \$250.00

**Total: \$1,750.00**

**Timothy Sittma**

Timothy Sittma is the managing partner of Crosland Southeast which is a commercial real estate development and investments company in the south eastern portion of the US.

<https://croslandsoutheast.com/>

NC Realtors PAC donated \$1,000.00 on 9/16/2019. On the same day two other real estate and development industries donated a total of \$750.00 (Peter Pappas \$250.00 and Timothy Sittma \$500.00)

**Timothy Sittma's Contributions to Julie Eislet's Campaign Fund:**

9/16/2019 \$500.00

**Total: \$500.00**

**Eislet Approved 2017-054 on 9/8/2017**

**Campaign Donors with Vested Interests:**

**Damon Hemmerdinger**

Hemmerdinger is the co-president of ATCO which is a real estate operating company with origins in New York City.

**Damon Hemmerdinger's contributions to Julie Eislet's Campaign Fund:**

9/11/2017 \$250.00

6/19/2019 \$1,000.00

**Total: \$1,250.00**

**Eislet Approved 2018-142 September 2019**

**Crandall Bowles**

Campaign Donor with Vested Interests in real estate development:

**Crandall Bowles' Contributions to Julie Eislet's Campaign Fund**

10/24/2019 \$2,000.00

4/3/2017 \$1,000.00

8/2/2017 \$500.00

5/15/2019 \$2,000.00

**Total: \$5,500.00**

**Eiselt Approved 2019-055**

**Campaign Donors with Vested Interests:**

**NC Home Builders Association Build PAC**

8/27/2019 \$500.00

10/28/2019 \$1,000.00

**Total: \$1,500.00**

**NC Realtor's PAC**

08/27/2019 4,000.00

**Total: \$4,000.00**

**Eislet's support of Lincoln Harris Real Estate Developer John Harris III**

Lincoln Harris is a real estate management, brokerage, and development resources firm. John Harris often brings his business needs to Charlotte City Council and has found a sympathetic audience with Julie Eislet.

**John Harris' contributions Julie Eislet's Campaign Fund:**

9/11/2017 \$500.00

08/27/2019 \$1,000.00

**Analysis of the data:**

**Julie Eislet's on the record donations from real estate development companies and from anti-union Anthony Fox and total \$27,400.00 . This is an astronomical amount compared to other city council members. Clearly the data demands an investigation.**