



CITY OF KENNER

PRESS RELEASE

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Mayor

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KENNER CITY ATTORNEY LOUIS GRUNTZ ACTED PROPERLY WHEN DENYING ACCESS TO “CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS”

Kenner, LA. – A Jefferson Parish judge ruled today that Kenner City Attorney Louis Gruntz acted properly in his decision to reject a public records request by Kenner resident Jack Zewe noting that had Gruntz supplied Zewe with the information he requested the city would have violated a federal settlement agreement.

Zewe attempted to gain information on a legal settlement in favor of a female firefighter who accused Kenner Fire Chief John Hellmers of discrimination, retaliation and sex discrimination. Gruntz denied Zewe the records and held that the information in the settlement would violate the rights of the parties involved in the settlement. Judge John Molaison agreed with Gruntz in today’s decision and protected the records from being release.

Zewe also asked the court to pay for his attorney fees and damages when attempting to secure the “confidential” records. The judge determined that no damages occurred as a result of the public records remaining confidential. The judge did, however, allow Zewe to recover attorney fees noting that Gruntz could have provided more specific information when stating his reason for denying public access to the records and had he done so that may have discouraged Zewe from pursuing the records through legal counsel.

This was not the first public records request by Zewe. The Kenner resident has made more than 130 public records requests in a four year period.

Said Gruntz, “We follow the law. The mayor and council promote open government, open access to information and full transparency. But there are laws in place to protect the rights of individuals, and we must adhere to those laws and not tread on privacy rights. It is regretful that Mr. Zewe did not trust our good judgment and filed a suit that simply cost the city money. He must know by now that we have never denied him access to records that are within the rights of the city to release.”

Kenner Chief Administrative Officer Mike Quigley echoed Gruntz’ feelings and noted, “We can only hope that Jack Zewe’s motives for suing the city were proper. He has a son who is in government, and as a result he should know the financial burden that legal challenges with little or no merit place on a city. We have always complied with his requests when it is in our legal authority to do so. This recent request was not one that we could approve and still remain within the confines of federal law.”

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