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## Beaumont councilman fined by FPPC

BY JULIE FARREN  
Record Gazette

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Beaumont City Councilman Brian De Forge has paid a \$1,000 fine to the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) for not reporting income earned by his construction business for work done with the Beaumont-Cherry Valley Water District.

The fine stems from a complaint that was filed in April 2011 by Beaumont resident Judy Bingham on behalf of the Beaumont Citizens for Responsible Growth, to which she is a member. According to documents, De Forge's construction company worked with the water district in 2007 to build its new office at 560 Magnolia Ave.

De Forge's company - Brian E. De Forge Construction - was paid \$174,100 for 16 weeks worth of work on the project. He employed 10 workers and was the sub contractor to the general contractor.

According to the FPPC, any single source of \$10,000 or more earned in an elected official's voting area must be reported.

De Forge said in a phone interview Monday that he thought he had been filling out the forms correctly for the past 15 years and there was never any intention of hiding the income from the public.

He earned about 10 percent, or \$17,000



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percent, or \$17,000,  
of the money paid  
from the water  
district for that project.

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De Forge, a council member since 1999, said he didn't know that Bingham had filed the complaint until a reporter called him in June 2011 and asked him if he knew he was being investigated.

"I never knew there was a complaint," said De Forge.

One of the main reasons he didn't know, he said, was that Bingham listed his former address on the complaint and he didn't receive it.

De Forge said he gave his correct address and phone number to the FPPC in July and didn't hear anything until January 2012. He was told that he needed to amend the Form 700 (Statement of Economic Interest) he had filled out dating back to 2007.

De Forge said he amended the forms, then learned at the end of June that the fine for failing to report the income was \$2,000.

He settled with the FPPC for a \$1,000 fine. The maximum fine is \$5,000. The FPPC was scheduled to vote on the settlement proposal on Thursday, Aug. 16.

De Forge said it was his error in filling out the forms and wanted to thank Bingham for bringing it to his attention.

"I always want to maintain transparency with the voters who elected me," he said.

He also said that the FPPC said the situation was "aggravated" because the council had business dealings with the water district.

De Forge said there were three separate items that came to the council, including voting to close a street so the water district could work on their waterlines; the water district petitioned to vacate an alley that ran behind their new building; and the water district was named in the annexation of the Sunnycal egg ranch property on Cherry Valley Boulevard.

De Forge said he sought legal opinion on all three items before hearing or taking action. He said he recused himself from all proceedings.

Bingham, who has been outspoken about city management and the city council, said she did a public records search and found out about De Forge's error to report the money earned from the water district.

Bingham said she is "tired of hearing about their excuses and that they didn't know any better." She said there is a conflict of interest since De Forge is on the city council. Bingham also acknowledged that council members are required to take ethics training as an elected official.

"This is a requirement of all public officials to report all of their income," she said.

Bingham said she believes that elected officials should be held to the same standards as the general public.

"These public officials get treated with kid gloves and the public is always the one who pays," she said.

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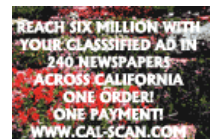
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