



# City of Linden

UNION COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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OFFICE OF  
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May 23, 2019

United States Attorney Craig Carpenito  
District of New Jersey  
970 Broad Street – Seventh Floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

Dear Mr. Carpenito:

I wish to bring to your attention circumstances that may require an investigation by your office. Specifically, Mr. Ed Oatman who currently serves as the County Manager for the County of Union, and Mr. Nick Fixmer who currently serves as the Executive Director of the Union County Democratic Committee are business partners as co-owners of an entity, Parktowne Associates.

As per the website of Parktowne Associates, the mission of referenced entity “is focused on providing our clients with creative, focused and successful political messaging”. The mission statement boasts of “considerable success orchestrating Democratic victories in races ranging from the local through the federal levels”. It is widely known that many of these races were for candidates, seeking election or re-election to various public offices in Union County Democratic Committee’s selected candidates for County Freeholder, all of whom have taken office.

While both Mr. Oatman and Mr. Fixmer co-own Parktowne Associates, Mr. Fixmer also owns another entity, Paragon Strategies and Consulting. Recently, it was brought to my attention that Paragon represents an engineering firm that has regularly appeared on Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders’ agenda, seeking contract approval. This engineering firm has received contracts of substantial value that were approved by both the Board of Freeholders and the county administration, which is headed by Mr. Oatman, the County Manager – and Mr. Fixmer’s partner.

Making matters even grimmer, it has been alleged that in April, 2018, Mr. Nicholas Scutari who serves as both State Senator of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Legislative District and Chairman of the Union County Democratic Committee, along with both Mr. Oatman and Mr. Fixmer, summoned an executive of referenced engineering firm, along with their then lobbyist to the County Manager’s office and directed Paragon Strategies and Consulting be hired by the engineering company to represent the engineering company’s interest with county government.

The outlined circumstances are troubling for many reasons, conveying great potential for conflict of interest, abuse of power and violation of both federal and state law. At the very least, it would seem that Mr. Fixmer's existing business relationship with Mr. Oatman should preclude Mr. Fixmer from receiving any monetary benefit that is a result of official actions taken by county government. Also, Mr. Fixmer representing a client seeking and being awarded county contracts (which requires a vote by the Freeholder Board) while at the same time working for members of the Freeholder Board campaigns raise similar issues.

Sadly, there is not even a pretense of separation between county government and the Union County Democratic organization. Based on numerous press reports, the Freeholder Board is well-aware of the Oatman-Fixmer business relationship and doesn't have a problem with it.

It is my hope that your office will be able to offer a full review of these matters, as the trust of the public hangs in the balance. Thank you in advance for your concern in this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derek Armstead". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "D".

Honorable Mayor Derek Armstead