

At the June Board meeting I questioned whether AADL was using public monies to pay for political purposes in violation of Michigan law with the execution of the contract with Allerton-Hill Consulting.

Since the June meeting I received a communication from the AADL that my perceptions were not shared by the AADL Board. Tonight I would like to read a few e-mail excerpts from material gathered in the May FOIA by the Protect Our Libraries PAC that created my misperception.

How did AADL become involved with Allerton- Hill Consulting?

On December 12, 2012 Director Josie Parker received an e-mail from from Luke Shaefer, assistant professor in the UM School of Social Work.

Professor Schaefer wrote-- "I am an Ann Arbor resident who watched the library bond issue with interest. My colleague and friend, Joel Gagne, runs a consulting firm that helps public entities communicate more effectively with the public, particularly around tax levies. His firm has a track record of working on campaigns that have resulted in hundreds of millions of additional dollars in public investments."

December 14, 2012 Director Parker responded to Professor Schaefer writing in an e-mail-- "Thank you very much for your e-mail and the possible link to Mr. Gagne. We are happy to talk to him and to you , about the AADL and the unsuccessful bond proposal for a new downtown library. I shared your interest in our situation with my executive committee, and they too would appreciate joining a conversation if we decide to have one."

On December 19, 2012 Director Parker e- mailed President Leary-- "Thanks so much Margaret. Eli, Celeste, and I were on the phone today with Joel Gagne from Allerton-Hill, and we were impressed.

I sent him more information and he is going to look things over and talk to me again next week. After that, they may make a proposal. He asked us why it failed, and after discussing it with us pretty much summed it up. We were working blind.

He suggested that we needed a two year lead up to another vote if a vote is the decision. He was easy to talk to and did not sound like a used car salesman. His company is all about research, data, and communication. He also said the communication should be 80% the AADL and 20 % an advocacy group. Very different demeanor and pitch from MW. Just as a matter of interest, I have not received a proposal from EPIC/MRA and am a little surprised."

On December 20, 2012 President Leary e-mailed Director Parker responding --- "Thanks I looked at their website and immediately saw things we did less well than we could have. First lesson I saw: Never surprise the voters."

Later on December 20, 2012 Director Parker e-mailed President Leary writing-- "I am taking in so much information right now from every direction and am purposefully NOT trying to make decisions or make judgements. The consultant from Allerton Hill was very blunt about our chances of success anytime in the next couple of years: not possible. I'm hearing that from everyone who wants to talk to me to me, and I'm listening. It is humbling, but nor hopeless."

On January 14, 2013 Allerton-Hill submits their references in writing to AADL. Who are their references and how do they describe their own work? The references are:

"David Conley of R W Baird-- David works for an investment bank that specializes in public bonds throughout the mid-west. David has seen our communication work first hand. We have helped their clients pass millions in bonds. We currently enjoy a partnership with them developing communications plans.

David Axner-- Superintendent Dublin City Schools-- We worked their campaign this last November. They lost their operation issue the year before, they had strong opposition in the form of the conservative Buckeye Institute, we were able to overcome this with strong messaging and better organization.

Vicki Gnezda-- Communications, Worthington City Schools-- We are working with the district on their long term communications issues. They have had long standing opposition, which includes a board member. With our help they were successful in passing their last two issues and overcoming their opposition.

Rick Hanes-- Superintendent Piqua City Schools-- We worked with them both from a district end and campaign end to pass a bond in 2010. No real organized opposition. Very conservative part of the state, our polling only had them at 35% approval of the project."

On February 5, 2013 Trustee Leary e-mails Director Josie Parker commenting on a communication from PAC consultant Rorke, she writes:

"I think he makes two points: one about voter confusion (dichotomy between perception that library is fine, and library wanting a new building). that we do know.

His second point, relates to Communications, is our inability to express what we need AADL to become that is not (yet). That's what I think Allerton-Hill can help us with and my understanding is that they would design that message only after finding out what single fairly simple "thing" that resonates with most voters."

A month later, after the signing of the Allerton-Hill agreement, on March 2, 2013, AADL Trustee Margaret Leary e- mailed President Prue Rosenthal.

In this e- mail Trustee Margaret Leary writes:

"My opinion at this moment is that AADL should consider making a plan--very broad, no details--and make it public, perhaps in March. Otherwise I fear the "other side" may take away the initiative and create a conversation in which AADL has little role, thus creating political forces and opinions building on what people remember from the election and getting farther and farther from whatever we might decide to do. I am not sure this is a good idea, but could you consider it Prue?

That is, to talk about "what to tell the public" But then I get back to the need for the communication audit, plan and message before we talk, so I am back where I started."

We are back where we started at last month's meeting. The Allerton-Hill Consulting Contract is not a generic communications project. It is clear that Allerton-Hill provides political advocacy for the passing of public financing issues. It is clear that the leadership of AADL recognized this fact and desired these services. We ask the Board of Trustees to review this contract and determine whether it is legal under Michigan law?