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City Manager's Po Is Odessa's Top Official Leveraging

August 28, 2024 Jeff Russell Publisher - Odessa Headlines

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Odessa City Manager John Beckmeyer and his wife, Teresa, are at the center of a growing controversy with questions arising as to if they are using city resources and their influential positions to push a political agenda in the upcoming City Council elections. Recent events indicate that the Beckmeyers may be involved in guiding the campaigns of the incumbents while blurring the lines between city employment, public service and political manipulation.

City Resources Used for Political Attacks

When the City of Odessa's Facebook page published a post attacking a press release from former Odessa Development Corporation board members Kris Crow and Jeff Russell, many residents were shocked. The comments section filled with criticism about the unprofessional tone of the post. The city's communications apparatus appeared to have been weaponized to serve the political interests of Beckmeyer and his allies.

The Beckmeyers' Political Ties and Ambitions

John Beckmeyer's background as Executive Director of the Republican Party of Texas gave him significant experience in strategic communications, fundraising, and political operations. His wife, Teresa, plays a similar role as Senior Advisor for the Saulsbury family, representing their interests in political causes across the state and nation. This influence now appears to be directed locally, where it seems a strategy has been devised to exert political control in Odessa. direction of Ronnie Lewis, crossed over to vote in the Republican Primary. Also, almost 1,500 voters who had never before voted in any primary election headed to the polls to often cast only one vote on the entire ballot as they voted for Donna Kelm over incumbent Tisha Crow.

It's important to note that prior to the primary and at Teresa's request, the Ector County Republican Party contracted with the "Allied Special Intelligence Group" to provide a two day strategic planning session focused on identifying and counteracting possible community threats from radicalized groups. It was the Allied meetings that Ronnie Lewis and his team made much to do about characterizing the training as secret meetings on how to spy on and take out your enemies.

The Private Meetings and Unveiling of the Strategy

After the 2024 Republican Primary, I was invited by Teresa Beckmeyer to a private meeting at the Beckmeyer residence. Present were John, Teresa, and Bubba Saulsbury (via Zoom). The purpose was to discuss the Odessa City Council and mayoral races and I was briefed on a campaign strategy crafted by political consultant Matt Armstrong.

Armstrong's plan focused on reelecting incumbents Javier Joven, Denise Swanner, and Mark Matta by exploiting supposed racial divides, particularly among the Hispanic community. The strategy proposed staging divisive events to provoke anger among Hispanic voters and drive them to support Joven. While this racially charged tactic raised serious ethical concerns, the Beckmeyers were steadfast in their support, despite the risk that it might create or deepen racial tensions in Odessa. In an email recap sent out by Teresa Beckmeyer and copied to husband John, one notable agenda item highlighted the need to use the City of Odessa's social media accounts to "set the narrative" in favor of their chosen candidates. The idea of using taxpayer resources to run a political campaign was uncharted territory and deeply troubling.



Also discussed were the details around Councilman Mark Matta's relationship with the wife of a City employee. The Beckmeyers believed that Matta should either get ahead of this story or should not run for reelection and should perhaps even resign his seat. The allegations that had been made by the wife's husband were serious and the woman's husband was promising to make it a campaign issue. John, it seems, had been briefed on this situation by the employee's department head. On the agenda recap provided by Teresa this item was listed as "Candidate problem - 1. Come out publicly or drop out and let us find a new candidate. John/Jeff".

The Continued Push for Influence

A second meeting followed on March 28, 2024, where the Beckmeyers reiterated their plan to create racial tensions to mobilize support for Joven. They confirmed that Matt Armstrong would lead the campaigns of Joven, Swanner, and Matta, with plans to establish several political action committees (PACs) to support their efforts. Despite my expressed reservations, it became clear that this strategy was moving forward.

Beckmeyers' Involvement in the March 2024 Republican Primary

During the contentious 2024 Republican Primary elections, John and Teresa provided strategy and guidance to the incumbent Ector County Republican Party officials and worked to influence the outcome. For the most part their strategy failed and local Republicans were replaced as a wave of Democrats, under the As the discussion progressed, they asked me to join the campaign. While some aspects of the Beckmeyer-Armstrong plan were typical of most political campaigns, the use of racially inflammatory tactics and the plan to deploy city resources made me hesitant. I also didn't like the fact that a lot of the Beckmeyers' motivation to reelect the incumbents seemed to be to protect John's \$250,000+benefits per year City salary.

In subsequent conversations I had with Armstrong, the focus remained on the "divide and conquer" approach. The Beckmeyers, along with Armstrong, were committed to using racially charged tactics to sway the election in favor of their chosen candidates. This strategy, more typical of liberal campaigns, was alarming in a

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litical Power Play: Public Resources for Political Gain?

community like Odessa, which has traditionally been merit-based and inclusive.

A Joke Becomes a Political Tool

During a recent City Council meeting, a light-hearted presentation by Kris Crow welcoming Councilman Vasquez to the Republican Party took a dark turn. Though intended as a joke, Vasquez later claimed in the Odessa American that he was attacked and reaffirmed his Democratic identity, stating he crossed over in the Republican primary solely to vote against certain Republicans, most notably Kris' wife Tisha who had served for the past fourteen years as the Chair of the Ector County Republican Party.

Joven, Swanner, and Matta quickly issued nearly identical statements condemning Crow's "attack," signaling a coordinated effort to exploit the incident as part of the Beckmeyer led campaign.

Coordinated Messaging and the **Bigger** Picture

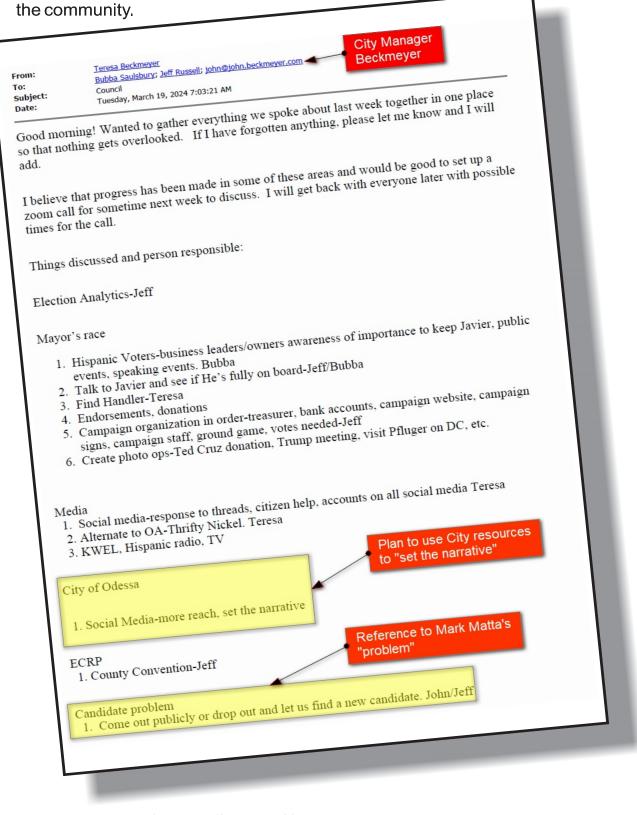
As the election heats up, the incumbents have released a series of videos with nearly identical messaging, all filmed with the same backdrop and footage signaling that they are all working in concert. The themes are clear: while expressing a love for Odessa, work to divide the community along racial lines, pit groups against each other, and cast successful white citizens as part of Odessa's problems. These tactics align perfectly with the Beckmeyer strategy discussed in those meetings.

governance seems to have taken a back seat to political scheming. The use of city resources to support specific candidates is a breach of public trust that should not be overlooked and the City Council should take quick and decisive action to stop any abusive use of taxpayer funded resources by Beckmeyer and should also appoint a special committee to investigate the extent to which the Beckmeyers are attempting to tip the scales in the current Council elections.

Obvious Questions For Odessa Voters

The question for Odessa now is whether its leadership should be focused on serving the public or on pushing a political agenda that divides The actions of the Beckmeyers and their associates show a clear conflict between public duty and personal ambition, raising serious concerns about the future of our city. Voters will no doubt have to factor the tactics being deployed by Joven, Swanner, and Matta and their handlers before they cast their vote this November and will also have to evaluate whether or not John Beckmeyer should continue in his job as City Manager.

Odessa Headlines will continue to follow this and other local elections as the November election nears.



Many online commentators have also raised questions about whether city resources were used to produce the videos.

The Broader Implications for Odessa

Voters expect city managers and other key administrators to stay out of political campaigns, focusing instead on running the city effectively. Yet, Beckmeyer's entanglement in local politics has already harmed Odessa. Under his watch, the city's bond rating has been pulled by the two major ratings groups (S&P and Moody's) as

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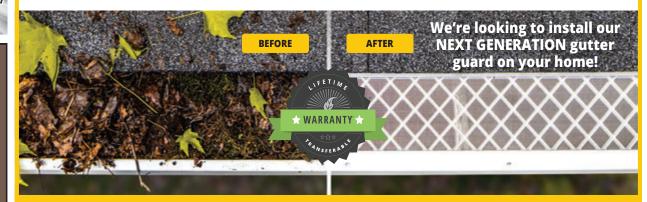


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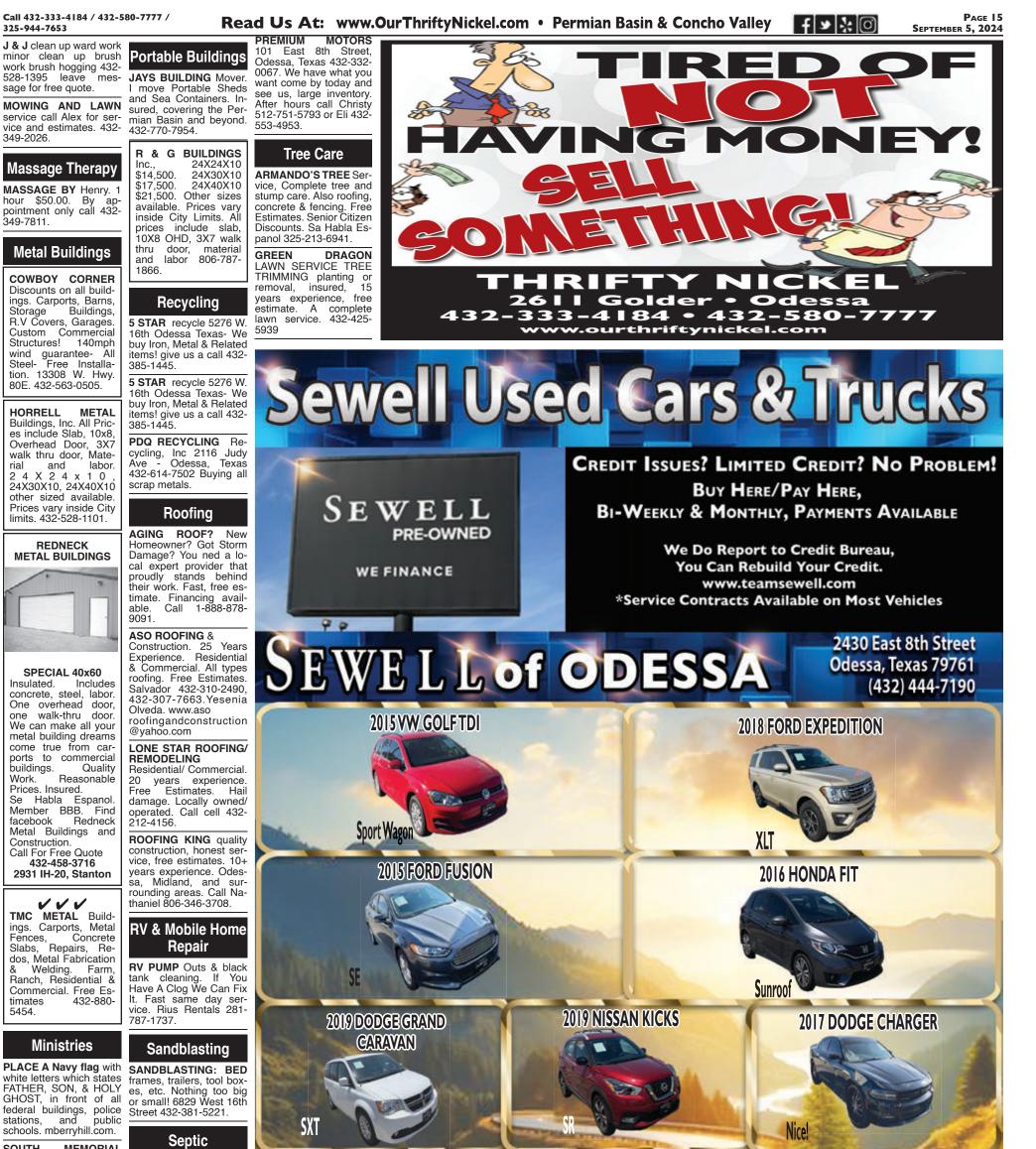
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