

February 2, 2011

Mr. Tom Linthicum  
Editor  
Maryland Daily Record

Dear Mr. Linthicum

I am writing in response to the article that appeared in the February 1, 2011 edition of The Daily Record regarding my position at EBDI and my relationship with Housing Commissioner Paul T. Graziano. I question the ethics of the reporter Melody Simmons who interviewed me over two years ago and discovered this relationship at that time. Based on all of the facts I disclosed at that time to Ms. Simmons and another colleague of hers at WYPR, none of which are included in The Daily Record Article, she chose not to write about the relationship. She also assessed our relocation effort to me in the most glowing terms, expressing her amazement at the amount of work we were doing on behalf of the residents. Interestingly, I was not contacted by her to comment on this most recent article.

I have worked very hard over the last 25 years to develop a career in the affordable housing field. I grew up in a working class neighborhood of Boston, put myself through college and worked my way through a series of positions at housing authorities and community development agencies in Boston and New York City before coming to EBDI. In my last position in New York City, I worked as a senior policy advisor and one of only four executive staff to the New York City Housing Commissioner in the largest community development agency in the country, with a staff of 2500 and a budget of \$1B.

I made a decision to relocate to Baltimore for personal reasons in 2004. I came to the attention of Jack Shannon, CEO of EBDI, a small, recently established non-profit, through a series of referrals, beginning with an interview at the Enterprise Foundation. I chose not to divulge my relationship with the Commissioner prior to the interview at EBDI because I wanted to gain an offer based on merit. When an offer came, I immediately divulged the relationship to EBDI and I, not EBDI, suggested that an ethics ruling be obtained. The ruling came as no conflict and I accepted the position as Director of Acquisition and Relocation at a salary of \$85,000 per year, a figure that is very much in line with salaries paid to comparable staff at Baltimore Development Corporation and Baltimore Housing and Community Development. Funding by HCD in the form of a \$23M Section 108 loan from HUD for acquisition and relocation had already been approved for the EBDI project before I even interviewed for the position.

After Phase I was completed in 2006, two other employment offers came my way. In the end, I chose to remain at EBDI to complete the second phase of the project because I was committed to the residents, the project and my colleagues. My salary increased commensurate with the offers I had been made.

I am proud of the work of my team and my colleagues at EBDI and I am most proud of the outcomes for hundreds of households who have told us we have transformed their lives. An independent survey of relocated residents showed that over 80% were satisfied with their relocation experience, with nearly 50% rating it excellent. That is factual and that is also what matters most to me.

Sincerely,



Arlene Conn