

Communication from Public

Name: Is this on topic?

Date Submitted: 10/26/2022 12:58 AM

Council File No: 20-0608

Comments for Public Posting: Dearest Reader of the Council Files, Please find attached the lurid and sordid menu of one Paul Koretz and his many scandalous, delicious ethics violations. The bold reader will find many tempting morsels, but do make sure to save room for the final course. For an appetizer, we have an illegal fundraiser with a City Commissioner. For a palate cleanser, we have a misuse of City Resources, and finally for the main course, we have illegal and unregistered lobbying and revolving door violations. It's almost as if this motion is simply an attempt at misdirection. A stained table cloth on a rickety dining table. Paul, do you wonder what's coming for dessert? I sure hope you're hungry.

DWP Commissioner Held Fundraiser for Councilmember Koretz in Violation of City Ethics Laws

The October fundraiser for Koretz's city controller campaign appears to have been in violation of several ethics laws.

Jon Peltz | February 22, 2022



(Image: Paul Koretz | [Facebook](#))

On October 11, 2021, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Commissioner Jill Banks Barad-Hopkins sent out invitations to a fundraiser for CD 5 councilmember and city controller candidate [Paul Koretz](#), which would be held in the backyard of her house on October 23. Attached was a flier with her name on it next to Koretz's, and a payment form for contributions and tickets. She also noted Koretz's work on labor rights, animal rights, environmental protection, and reducing homelessness.



Paul Koretz for City Controller

Hosts

Jill Banks Barad & Francine Oschin

Sponsors

Mary Ellen Early • Ira Freeman • Allen M. Lawrence
Hon. Scott Schmerelson • Hon. Rick Tuttle • Howard Welinsky
(List In Formation)

Saturday, October 23, 2021, 3PM-5PM

Outdoors at the Home of Jill Banks Barad
15226 Sutton Street, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

Sponsors \$1000 • Friends \$500 • Supporters \$250 • Guests \$100

RSVP to Ben Feldman: nancydolanassociates2@gmail.com or (323) 465-9655
Maximum contribution: \$1,500 per person
Make your contribution for the event by clicking [HERE](http://www.koretzforla.com)
www.koretzforla.com

Paid for by Paul Koretz for Controller 2022. ID# 1425861. 419 N. Larchmont Blvd. #37, Los Angeles, CA 90004

Invitation for Jill Banks Barad-Hopkins' Koretz fundraiser

Francine Oschin and I are hosting an event for Councilmember Paul Koretz, who is running for LA City Controller in the June 2022 election. The event will be at my house in the backyard on Saturday, October 23 from 3-5 p.m.

Paul has been an outstanding councilmember and before that a state legislator and councilmember in the City of West Hollywood. He is known for defending workers' rights, protecting animal rights, environmental protection, reducing gun violence, and working to reduce homelessness.

I have known and worked with Paul for over 25 years and know he will be an outstanding City Controller.

Masks REQUIRED, if not fully vaccinated. We look forward to seeing you on October 23.

ALL the Best,
Jill Banks Barad- Hopkins

A letter sent from DWP Commissioner Jill Banks Barad-Hopkins inviting people to her home for a fundraiser.

While the letter seems anodyne, city ethics laws are clear — it is prohibited for city commissioners to hold fundraisers for a candidate for office. It is also a violation of city ethics laws for city officials to ask someone else to make a contribution, to put their names on an invitation, to put their name or signature on a fundraising event, to use their home for a fundraising event, or to act as an “agent or intermediary in the making of a contribution.”

These are all individual violations of section 49.5.5 of the [governmental ethics ordinance](#) concerning “misuse of City resources,” and 49.7.11 of the city’s [campaign finance ordinance](#) concerning “solicitation and delivery of campaign contributions.” The laws this invitation violates are also summarized quite succinctly right on the City Ethics Commission website.



If you are the head of an agency or a board or commission member, you also cannot:

- Solicit, direct, or receive a contribution from a person who has, or in the preceding 12 months had, a matter involving City action pending before you. Additional state law restrictions may also apply.
- Engage in the following activities on behalf of an elected City official, a candidate for elected City office, or a City controlled committee (unless the activities are on behalf of your own candidacy):
 - Asking someone to make a contribution. Inviting someone to a fundraising event.
 - Supplying names to be used for invitations to a fundraising event.
 - Permitting your name, signature, or City title to appear on a solicitation for contributions or an invitation to a fundraising event.
 - Providing the use of your home or business for a fundraising event.
 - Hiring someone to conduct a fundraising event.
 - Delivering someone else's contribution to an elected City officer, a candidate for elected City office, or a City controlled committee.
 - Acting as an agent or intermediary in the making of a contribution.
- Ethics commissioners may not participate in or contribute to the election campaign of:
 - Anyone running for City or LAUSD office.
 - A City official or LAUSD member running for any office.

(Source: [Los Angeles City Ethics Commission](#))

A source tells *Knock LA* that the City Ethics Commission has received a complaint regarding this incident.

In addition to serving on the DWP board, Barad-Hopkins is also the [founder and chair](#) of the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils, which represents 34 of the 99 neighborhood councils in the city of LA.

Knock LA spoke with one of the event's co-hosts, Francine Oschin, who confirmed that the October fundraiser took place. Oschin runs Oschin Partners, Inc., which is registered as a lobbying firm with the City of LA.

Oschin said that "Jill [Banks Barad-Hopkins] is a very cautious person" and that she was sure Barad-Hopkins "cleared" the event. It's unclear what Oschin meant by this. Barad-Hopkins did not respond for comment at the time of publication.

Because Oschin does business with Metro, she says she is careful not to make any political donations. However, other hosts on the fundraiser's flier — Rick Tuttle, Ira Freeman, and Mary Ellen Early — made contributions to Koretz's city controller campaign within weeks of the fundraising event, and Barad-Hopkins' husband, Ross Hopkins, also made a donation. Also listed on the flier are Allen Lawrence and Howard Welinsky, who made maximum contributions in late 2020.

Oschin says that Councilmember Koretz reached out to them about having a fundraiser. "He didn't say, 'I need to raise money,' he said 'I need to get my name out there, that would be good to be able to talk to people, so they know who I am,'" she recalled.

"[Barad-Hopkins] should know better. This is like in the basic brochure for political activity that all of these city officials are given. This is very simple, straightforward shit," says Rob Quan, an organizer with [Unrig LA](#).

"Generally speaking, all of these commissioners go through ethics training ... And this is like a very textbook, no."

Quan adds that candidates have ample opportunity to speak to the Ethics Commission informally about murky or unclear situations. They can also receive "[formal](#)" advice in writing from the commission, and receive immunity from ethics enforcement if the candidate acts "in good faith" on that advice. This formal advice becomes a [searchable](#) public record. There's a bounty of options, "so at that level, it's pretty shocking," says Quan.

Quan added that this is even more surprising given that, in June 2021, CD 9 candidate Dulce Vasquez filed a [complaint](#) with the City Ethics Commission over two redistricting commissioners appearing on a fundraising flier for Councilmember Curren Price Jr. In that scenario, Price's campaign manager claimed the fliers were never sent out and that the event did not occur.

The David Vahedi and Kenneth Mejia campaigns for city controller have [both noted](#) the Koretz fundraiser on their social media. City controller candidate Rob Wilcox, who is also the spokesperson for [City Attorney Mike Feuer](#), told *Knock LA*, “We have ethics laws and an Ethics Commission to enforce those laws for a reason. I fully expect Ethics to conduct the appropriate investigation and report publicly their findings.”

Once an investigation is finished, penalties are meted out per violation, and can include cease-and-desist orders or demands for documents to be [filed](#), as well as a maximum of \$5,000 in monetary penalties per violation or three times the amount of money per issue.

Oschin is adamant that “Paul [Koretz] is a very honorable person. I don’t think he would do anything that wasn’t absolutely above board.”

Councilmember Koretz did not respond to *Knock LA* by the time of publication.

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City Controller Candidate Paul Koretz Racks Up Yet Another Campaign Ethics Violation

The Koretz campaign unethically sent a campaign email using city resources, boasting of Koretz's reputation for reform and accountability.

Jonny Coleman | May 4, 2022



(Image: paulkoretz | [Instagram](#))

CD 5 Councilmember [Paul Koretz](#) hasn't had a great past couple of months.

First there were his fundraising [campaign violations](#), which were uncovered in February. Then two weeks ago Kenneth Mejia, Koretz's challenger in the upcoming city controller election, received the *LA Times*' endorsement.

This endorsement, in turn, has ruffled feathers at Koretz campaign headquarters — campaign communications director Parke Skelton has gotten repeatedly [ratioed](#) for his bad posts in response to it.

Making matters worse, Team Koretz has also come under scrutiny by constituents outside his district, as the Reseda Neighborhood Council recently called attention to what appear to be more blatant campaign ethics violations.

Jamie York, secretary of the Reseda Neighborhood Council, received an April 8 email blast sent by Koretz's campaign to the Reseda Neighborhood Council list and recognized that this was a problem.

On Fri, Apr 8, 2022 at 2:46 PM Koretz for LA 2022 <koretzforla@gmail.com> wrote:

PAUL KORETZ

FOR CITY CONTROLLER

Hi Community Leader,

I want to personally reach out to you since you are an integral member of the community. I am running for LA City Controller and hope to earn your support.

As you may know, I was first elected to the Los Angeles City Council in July 2009 in large part thanks to the support from Neighborhood Council and HOA members like you. I have been a champion for high quality and efficient city services as a member of the Los Angeles City Budget Committee for 10 years. I also have chaired the Audits and Government Efficiency Committee, and currently chair the Personnel, Audits, & Animal Welfare Committee (the Committee that hears and advances the Controller's audits).

I have fought to enact reforms that have saved Los Angeles millions of dollars. I have developed a reputation as an independent budget watchdog who has experience and a thorough understanding of a complex budget in one of the largest cities in the United States. As a member of the LA City Council, I am dedicated to solving our City's long-time homelessness problem, and will use the Office of City Controller to focus on improving the city's approach to homelessness. This begins with an intensive analysis of the programs and processes we use to combat this crisis, prioritizing actions which have been most effective, and streamlining our processes for building homeless and low-income housing.

The email Koretz's campaign sent out to the entire EmpowerLA neighborhood council mailing list.

“I noticed immediately as this is not the first ethics violation I have reported and I take the separation of government and the political

seriously,” York explained via email. “It was however the first campaign email sent to the entire body of our neighborhood council using our city distribution list.”

According to the spirit of existing campaign regulations, public officials fundamentally shouldn’t be using city resources, in this case City of Los Angeles LISTSERVs accessed via EmpowerLA by Koretz, to campaign for a city office.

York immediately forwarded the Koretz email to the City Ethics Commission along with a message:

This is a violation of 49.5.5 b4 and C. The empowerla distribution lists are entirely city owned and operated. They are the lists used to contact neighborhood council members en masse, but they are maintained by the department of neighborhood empowerment, which is a city resource. Additionally, in no way did our neighborhood council opt into these emails.

. . .

York spread the news to colleagues, such as Reseda Neighborhood Council President DJ Frank and Parliamentarian Michelle Gallagher.

“We’d like the Ethics Commission to take a look at this and investigate it,” said Frank. “Where did they harvest the emails from? It’s not proper. If you’re a government employee, it gives you a leg up on your opponent.”

The Reseda Neighborhood Council then unanimously passed a [Community Impact Statement](#) outlining their concerns.

In speaking with colleagues on other neighborhood councils, we believe it is likely that all neighborhood councils with an email distribution list maintained

by the City received this campaign mailing. As there are 99 neighborhood councils, this may mean that 99 different City owned and maintained distribution lists were used in sending this communication.

For those who care about local politics, the issues this type of violation raises transcend party or political lines. “I think it’s a big deal if a candidate gets help from the city. It doesn’t matter who the candidate is. We have to have a fair election,” says Gallagher.

Neither Koretz’s campaign nor the Ethics Commission have returned requests for comment.

These complaints have gone unaddressed and will likely remain that way, say members of the Reseda Neighborhood Council. Like so many rules and regulations in LA that are in place, if they are not being properly enforced, they are essentially meaningless.

Entrenched electeds who put their thumb on the scale only help deflate an already saggy democracy in an uphill election year.

“It’s hard to get people to care about these local elections,” said Gallagher. “It’s very hard to get out the vote, especially when it’s not a presidential election year or a nonpartisan race. They don’t even care about the race, so why would they care about the corruption?”

The irony here is that Koretz boasts of being a champion of reform and accountability — in an email he’s distributing unethically.

“I have been fighting corruption in City Hall,” the original Paul Koretz campaign email boldly claims. “I am one of the authors of the ban on developer contributions which goes into effect in June, and worked on and

seconded the motion to create the Office of Anti-Corruption and Transparency.”

David Ryu, a former councilmember who has himself been [exposed for ethics violations](#), co-authored the motion with Koretz to create the Office of Anti-Corruption and Transparency. Against the backdrop of the José Huizar scandal, the motion passed in 2020.

To date, the Los Angeles Office of Anti-Corruption and Transparency has held zero meetings.

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CITY ETHICS LOBBYING PAUL KORETZ REAL ESTATE

Councilmember Koretz Seemingly Engages in Illegal Lobbying Scheme with Former Employee

In yet another apparent ethics violation, councilmember and controller candidate Koretz assisted former employee in potentially illegal lobbying.

Jon Peltz | October 12, 2022



Image: Knock LA

In 2017, a former senior employee of Councilmember Paul Koretz, Shawn Bayliss, lobbied Koretz for favors while seemingly prohibited from doing so by city ethics laws. Koretz potentially violated Section 706 of the LA City Charter when he aided and abetted Bayliss in these apparently illegal lobbying activities.

Bayliss worked for Koretz's office from 2011 to 2017, rising to the position of director of Planning & Land Use before his departure. According to Bayliss' Form 700 – a statement of economic interests that city employees have to file within 30 days of leaving their position – Bayliss left Koretz's office on May 12, 2017. On the same day, the Bel Air Association (BAA) [announced](#) Bayliss as its new executive director. Bayliss reached out to Koretz's private email in June 2017 from his BAA email, notifying him of a meeting about actions the city would take to [demolish](#) the residence of famed luxury developer Mohamed Hadid.

In Bayliss' letter, he specifically instructed Koretz to ask City Attorney Mike Feuer about putting the money levied from any punishment on Hadid's project back directly into the BAA, rather than a community fund proposed by the city. The BAA has received [criticism](#) from other homeowner groups for trying to redirect funds meant for public improvement into its own coffers. Bayliss provided a pro and con list of both funds, and said the BAA would provide the "City Attorney & Court requested accounting and transparency," and that the BAA knows how to "addresses [sic] issues of the community." The BAA is a private organization, not beholden to public input.

• • •

The saga surrounding the Hadid home at 901 Strada Vecchia Road began in 2011, when Hadid acquired the property and started obtaining permits. After disputes with neighbors, who said the property was being

constructed in dangerous violation of building codes, a judge eventually ordered its demolition in 2019. Hadid pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges, telling the [LA Times](#) he just wanted to “move on.”

Hadid notes to *Knock LA* that he [won](#) a jury trial against his neighbors concerning the property, and calls the BAA “fee collectors” who just decide who to exclude from their neighborhood. He says that the BAA wanted to [extort](#) him for \$3.5 million, and that the Beverly Hills Courier, the BAA, and Koretz’s office are the “Bel Air Mafia.”

Bayliss gave Koretz a contact in the city attorney’s office, Tina Hess, and told Koretz to contact her “asking for stiff punishment” in the form of declaring Hadid’s house a nuisance and moving to quickly demolish the property. In 2019, LA City prosecutors pushed to have the building destroyed, and then an LA County Superior Court judge [ordered](#) the property to be completely torn down.

Bayliss then attached a letter already written and directed to Frank Bush — the former general manager of the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety — advising Koretz to sign and send the letter using Koretz’s letterhead to the city attorney’s office. Bayliss added that it would make Koretz and City Attorney Mike Feuer “continue to be the heroes.”

The letter written by Bayliss was addressed from Koretz. Bayliss implored Koretz that “there will be a ton of press on this.” Koretz sent out the identical letter with his signature attached on June 23, 2017. The BAA then published the signed letter on its [website](#).

• • •

The City Ethics Commission’s “Revolving Door” laws are [clear](#). Certain previously employed council aides at higher levels cannot receive

compensation “for attempting to influence the actions of City agencies on behalf of other people (except government entities) for one year after leaving City service.” According to [Transparent California](#), Bayliss would qualify under the ban as a Council Aide VI.

Furthermore, City Ethics has a *permanent ban* on officials trying to influence City agencies in which they “personally and substantially” participated during city service. In 2015, Bayliss – while employed at Koretz’s office – gave the [Chicago Tribune](#) a quote calling Hadid a “scofflaw” and added: “Koretz sees no value in allowing a continuation of [Hadid’s] shenanigans.”

In response to a request for comment on this article, Bayliss first claimed that *Knock LA* did not understand the Los Angeles’ municipal lobbying laws and accused the publication of working directly with the [Kenneth Mejia campaign](#). Bayliss then asked *Knock LA* to send public records used for this reporting so he could review them. After *Knock LA* provided the documents, Bayliss stopped responding.

• • •

For his part, Councilmember Koretz seems to be in violation of Section 706 of the LA City Charter, which prohibits the “aiding and abetting” of others in an ethics violation. Koretz previously employed Bayliss, and city officials are required to undergo ethics training. Under law, Koretz would be guilty of a misdemeanor for being in violation.

The office of Councilmember Paul Koretz did not respond to requests for comment on this article.

As late as March 2017, Bayliss [attended](#) Neighborhood Council meetings on behalf of the Council District 5 office. The BAA [announced](#) in May 2017 that

Bayliss had accepted a role as their executive director, noting that he was a key staff member of Councilmember Koretz who worked on various issues such as mansionization, the crackdown on party houses, and preservation of hillsides and open spaces.

According to Form 990 that the BAA filed with the IRS, Bayliss was paid \$72,308 in 2017 in his role as director. The following year, he was paid \$72,166, and Bayliss reported receiving \$85,000 from other activities. In 2019, Bayliss received \$153,841 from the organization. He did not register as a lobbyist with the city officially until 2021.

However, in 2020, Bayliss donated \$1,500 to Koretz's city controller campaign, which is also prohibited under city laws under [Section 470](#) of the City Charter, if Bayliss was working as a lobbyist.

. . .

Lobbying is defined as direct communication with a city department in order to influence a decision, being compensated for lobbying work, and working 30 hours in a quarter on said work. While it's difficult to ascertain exactly how many hours Bayliss worked in 2020 – making enforcement of these prohibitions murky – records show that Bayliss joined a public hearing for the Department of City Planning in 2020.

Bayliss also joined a Bel Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council Meeting in November 2020 as an appellant on a land use appeal submitted by the BAA concerning the 10701 Bellagio property. He was a member-at-large at the NC and had to recuse himself from voting on his item. Since he recused himself, he was unable to present to the NC directly. The same land use appeal was discussed by the Bel Air Beverly Crest NC as far back as June 2020. The appeal by the BAA dates back to May 2019.

According to West Los Angeles Area Planning Commission supporting documents, Bayliss was working on the planning around the property in an official capacity in Koretz's office in 2015, making this another potential violation of "Revolving Door" laws.

The appeal was denied by the Department of Building and Safety on June 23, 2020, and Bayliss' donation to Koretz's controller campaign came five days later, on June 28, 2020. It's tough to prove how many hours went into a work as an appellant, but it's clear that Bayliss was being compensated for work in 2020, which included contacting city officials.

Councilmembers Paul Koretz and Bob Blumenfield then introduced a [motion](#) in November 2021 — three days after the zoning commission denied Bayliss' appeal on the matter — with the denial of the land use appeal, saying that the Department of Building and Safety "erred or abused its discretion." In the council file, Bayliss — who registered as a lobbyist in 2021 — is still listed as the appellant for the BAA.

• • •

There are no records of the BAA registering to lobby on the land use appeal until November 2021. However, two law firms — Jeffer Mangels Butler & Mitchell LLP and Armbruster Goldsmith & Delvac LLP — registered as doing lobbying work on the appeal on behalf of the property owner. With no other firms listed on behalf of the BAA, and Bayliss listed as the appellant, it's unclear who else would be working on the matter.

While ethics commission enforcement on unregistered lobbying isn't incredibly common, in 2021, the Ethics Commission enforced [penalties](#) for violating the municipal lobbying ordinance on Athena Novak, a land use consultant who failed to register as a lobbyist after doing more than 30

hours of paid lobbying work. Novak was also penalized for contributing to the campaign of former Councilmember John Lee.

Parke Skelton, the spokesman for Koretz's city controller campaign, first responded to a request for comment on the phone, saying "I don't think I'm prepared to talk to *Knock*," and hung up. Skelton later added via text, "Let's see, you are criticizing Koretz for accepting a donation from someone who was NOT a registered lobbyist? That's creative...Not to knock your journalism skills, but this is a touch puerile."

Donors to city candidates must declare under penalty of perjury that they are not lobbyists. If Bayliss perjured himself while claiming to not be a lobbyist but also received compensation from the BAA for lobbying work, that would be an additional violation. Koretz's acceptance of the donation would in itself also be a violation. If Koretz was aware of Bayliss' perjury — his campaign accepted the donation — that is possibly once again aiding and abetting Bayliss in his illegal activities.

• • •

Councilmember Koretz has been implicated in a litany of potential ethics violations. He [attended](#) a fundraiser held by a sitting Department of Water & Power commissioner in 2022 for his city controller campaign. Skelton, his campaign consultant, told the *LA Times* that they were returning \$8,000 from donors at the event. Koretz then [used](#) city resources to email campaign literature, for which he received at least one ethics complaint. More recently, Koretz used his time on City Council to [attack](#) his opponent in the controller race, [Kenneth Mejia](#), which is potentially a misuse of city resources.

According to public records of communications in Koretz's office, an *LA Times* reporter reached out to Koretz's office in 2022 regarding a story

involving the BAA. In the exchange, one of Koretz's aides said: "Odd, Shawn has a direct line to our office. I'll call him." In another letter, Koretz's aide added, "I work with Shawn and the Bel Air association on a regular basis."

According to the City Ethics Commission, Bayliss has lobbied the City Council in 2022, as well as the Los Angeles Fire Department, City Planning, the LAPD, the Board of Public Works, and the Department of Water & Power.

LA City Council has been mired in corruption scandals over the past 10 years. Indicted former LA City Councilmember José Huizar was [charged](#) with 34 counts of political corruption, some of which stemmed from his alleged [activities](#) with lobbyist Morris Goldman, who funneled money to Huizar's political campaign in exchange for favors.

More recently, leaders at Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils have argued for [stricter](#) municipal lobbying laws, in order to curb the influence of lobbyists on the neighborhood council system. Koretz is running as city controller to ostensibly monitor city finance and waste. Perhaps his time would be better spent re-reading city ethics laws.

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