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## Government

# Bellevue Council Sound Transit Ethics Probe Clears Degginger and Balducci; Wallace Status Pending

Attorney hired by the city says that there has been no conflict of interest in votes made by Bellevue council members Grant Degginger and Claudia Balducci. He awaits information from Kevin Wallace.

By [Venice Buhain](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 7, 2011

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Bellevue Council members Grant Degginger and Claudia Balducci did not have any conflicts of interest when in Sound Transit matters, reported an attorney hired by the city to examine a variety of complaints.

The attorney, Jeffrey B. Coopersmith of DLA Piper LLP, said that he would continue to examine the possible conflicts of interest in Sound Transit matters that Councilman Kevin Wallace may have -- which were the original possible conflicts that sparked the ethics probe.

The probe was sparked by a report in the Seattle Times that Wallace's property company had a memorandum of understanding with GNP, a railroad company that could have benefited from railroad improvements on the BNSF corridor along the city's preferred light rail alignment, called "revised B7." Wallace Properties had been in talks with GNP over its plans to expand a rail line from Snohomish to Redmond. GNP did not have immediate plans to expand to Bellevue, though the company reported that Bellevue was in its long-term plans.

The city's preference - which Wallace supports - differs from Sound Transit's preference to put light rail along Bellevue Way SE. Degginger and Balducci have been on the council minority and have opposed the city's position on the revised B7.

As questions were raised about Wallace's possible conflict of interest in the Sound Transit matter of where to put the light rail, residents also revived arguments that Degginger's decisions on Sound Transit should also be reexamined because the transit agency has employed his law firm and that Balducci's decisions should be examined because of her position on the Sound Transit board.

Coopersmith said that neither Degginger or Balducci actions and positions at work or on other boards have constituted a lack of professional conduct or a conflict of interest.

Coopersmith said that Balducci can participate in council discussions, executive session and decision making relating to potential litigation with Sound Transit regarding East Link if she recuses herself from all Sound Transit board discussions and decisions on any such potential litigation.

Balducci said at Monday night's meeting that she agrees with Coopersmith's findings, and she intends to inform Sound Transit of her recusal from those matters in writing.

Coopersmith said that he is awaiting information from Wallace's office before he makes a report on Wallace's possible conflicts. Wallace said at the council meeting that his office is cooperating fully with the probe.

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