

Transparency Project Announces Win in Oaks Lawsuit Against former Santa Monica City Manager Rod Gould

November 30, 2015 - After the City of Santa Monica refused to enforce its own anti-corruption law known as Oaks, three members of the Santa Monica Transparency Project stepped in as private citizens to do so. If they had not brought a lawsuit themselves, violations of the law would have continued to be ignored. Today the three Plaintiffs announced that their lawsuit has been successful and Oaks has finally been enforced.

Mary Marlow, Elizabeth Van Denburgh, and Nancy Coleman brought their lawsuit because, after former City Manager Rod Gould approved a series of contracts between the City and Management Partners, Inc., he accepted employment with the company soon after leaving office, in violation of Oaks.

Before the lawsuit was filed, the City Attorney was unwilling to enforce Oaks against Mr. Gould, claiming that there was no “action that this office can or should take.” Previously, the City Attorney had also not enforced Oaks against Councilmember Pam O’Connor. Thus, the City has never enforced Oaks.

In the settlement of the legal proceeding, Mr. Gould agreed:

1. **To resign** from Management Partners and refrain from accepting any employment with it until the end of the post-employment period during which such employment is prohibited under Oaks (January 31, 2017).
2. **To abide** by the post-employment restrictions of Oaks as to other companies for which he approved contracts while working for the City, also through January 31, 2017.
3. **To pay** \$20,000 to cover Plaintiffs’ attorneys fees and costs.

Oaks forms the backbone of the City’s anti-corruption and conflict-of-interest laws. It helps ensure that the decisions of the City’s public officials are made solely for the benefit of the public by prohibiting public officials from accepting campaign or personal benefits, including employment, from a company for a specified period of time after the official approves a public benefit for the company.

Fred Woocher, Bryce Gee and Beverly Grossman Palmer of the law firm Strumwasser & Woocher, LLP, represented the three plaintiffs. The lawsuit was filed in the Superior Court in Marin County where Mr. Gould now resides.