

**From:** "Ellen Ritchie" <@patmedia.net>  
**To:** "Ellen Ritchie" <@patmedia.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 06, 2006 10:45 PM  
**Subject:** Please Read

I would like to take this opportunity to address the accusations that were raised in Mike Orsini's e-mail to Brian Regan, subsequently referred to at a public council meeting by Joe Danielsen. Since a copy of this e-mail was in the Council packet today I guess it is now definitely public information. As most of you probably already know, someone filed a complaint with the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office against me. The person(s), however, did not have the strength of their own convictions to give a name, but filed it anonymously. I will not be told the nature of the charges. However, despite the advice of the attorney that I have been forced to retain to assure that this insanity does not ruin the excellent reputation I have spent 51 years building, I am sending you all this statement. This has mushroomed into a major mess and lie upon lie, and misunderstanding upon misunderstanding that keeps spreading.

I did not "hold a secret meeting with a developer and make a deal." This property owner/contract purchaser has no application before the Township. These are planning discussions and not approvals to build. I was only one person and obviously I know that I can not make "deals" on behalf of the Township. I also have spoken with other property owners and their attorneys over property that they have or want included in our fair share plan. I doubt that I am the only one to have done so. In all my years working for the Township property owners never hesitated to speak to Council and Planning Board members when it came time to prepare a new master plan, nor did anyone ever have a problem talking to the property owners. I spoke with this property owner/contract purchaser following the request of the Township Manager and the majority of the Council for the sole purpose of seeing if it would be possible to reduce the density of the potential development on the Veronica/Bennett's Lane tract. I was the one asked because I was the Director of Planning for Franklin Township for over 18 years, I am a professional planner by training, and clearly understand the developmental and environmental issues better than anyone else on the Council. My intent was only to find out that if I proposed a certain reduction would the developer file an objection with COAH. I proposed to him a development pattern equivalent to the existing CR Zone. The CR Zone along Route 27 is the zoning that has previously provided our affordable units through inclusionary development for the past 20+ years. These are Society Hill, Westminster Mews, Rolling Hills, etc. These were all developed at a density of 8 units per acre with a 15% set aside for low and moderate income units. I also wanted to see no construction on the lot along Bennetts Lane, hoping to satisfy some of the concerns that had been raised at previous meetings. I fully expected, though, that the developer would strenuously object to any reduction, just as he had when Ken Daly and our planning consultant discussed something similar with him.

After about an hour of discussion, I was left with the impression that the developer would indeed work with us if we proposed the lower density in our housing element and removed construction along Bennetts Lane. I also understood that the developer would still construct the 50 additional affordable units that we needed to make our plan whole and provide some buffer. I believe the buffer is important because I do not anticipate that COAH will accept all of the proposals in our plan. I was the Deputy Director of COAH for two years and helped to write the new rules. I think I know a little something about COAH. However, it is not my intent to discuss the merits of RCA's or inclusionary development or the red-shouldered hawk. I am merely recounting the chain of events and not the merits of any proposal.

After that meeting and prior to the planning board hearing that evening I called Ted Chase as Chair, Mike Orsini as Vice Chair and Joe Danielsen as an important member of the board to see if this new concept would be acceptable to them. Ted and Mike said it would, and Joe emphatically said it would not. I accepted Joe's opinion as I always have in the past.

To my utter amazement at the planning board meeting Mike Orsini voted no on my proposal to reduce the density. I never threatened him before that vote because I had no reason to think he would not vote as he had told me he would just hours earlier. I did not threaten Joe even though I knew he would vote against it. It was only after that vote that I did indeed walk over to behind Mike on the dais and tell him "You are politically F'd." What has so conveniently been left out of my comment was that he is "politically F'd as far as I am concerned because he is not a man of his word" and I can not work with someone like that. I apologize for using the "f" word because that is not normally in my vocabulary, but I also do not normally expect people to so blatantly lie to me either.

I did not "bully" Alex Mansary at all. I asked him to state why he abstained because I believed he did not understand what his abstention meant. I was correct in that assumption when he later told me he thought he had voted for the reduced density. Please ask him directly to verify this.

My outrage over this is that this has been constructively manipulated to impugn my character and I will not tolerate it. I will not allow people to continue to yell at me for having an opinion different than theirs. I will not tolerate people getting in my face and threatening me with criminal prosecution. I will not tolerate people accusing me publicly of something I have not done. And I will not tolerate "Democrats" who can not work together to discuss and resolve issues without running around crying foul when they don't get their way. And what has particularly been hurtful is that people I thought respected me did not even give me the common courtesy to speak to me and ask my side of this saga and just believed whatever Mike and Joe put out there. I really thought we were a team with the same hopes and aspirations for Franklin Township.