

# Granite-Gate Draft Draws Ire

## Preliminary Report Finds No Wrongdoing

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BRANFORD

If response to a tentative report on the 2006 "Granite-Gate" scandal is any indicator, 2007 isn't going to be any smoother in Branford politics.

The Sound has obtained a preliminary draft of the ad hoc committee's report, penned by the committee chair Scott Thayer [D], that concludes no wrongdoing occurred and that the matter

should be closed.

The report, not signed by any other committee members, has come under fire for its partisan praise of town hall, its conclusions, and its glossing over of the heart of the issue: whether criminal actions occurred when town hall and attorney Ed Marcus undertook an investigation or as some call it, an inquiry, into former first selectman Unk DaRos.

The committee was formed in the summer of 2006 to examine

the town's interest in the Stony Creek Quarry and to look into allegations of misdeeds by then-town counsel Ed Marcus regarding former first selectman and political rival Anthony "Unk" DaRos.

In the 2 1/2 page report, Thayer states that without the testimony of major players in the affair, including Branford Police Detective Duncan Ayr (who was allegedly sent by Marcus to investigate

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DaRos) and Mike Milici (who allegedly hired the private investigator whose photographs of DaRos's property spurred a police investigation), no judgment can realistically be reached.

Thayer then concludes that in his opinion nothing of a criminal or unethical nature occurred and that the matter should now be closed.

Thayer said that he stands behind his report but did want to answer questions or comment publicly until the ad hoc committee had all signed it.

"We are keeping an open mind on what other committee mem-

bers have to say. Our aim is to put together something that we can all put our name to," Thayer said.

Ad Hoc committee member John Prete [R] said that he is shocked by the brevity, many of the conclusions, and the appearance of partisan politics in Thayer's report.

"This is a glowing report with absolutely no criticism," said Prete. "This is nothing but fluff. There is no substance. This is just another way of skirting what happened. We won't accept it. I think we can safely say that if we can't get our opinions into this report, Frank [Twohill, R] and I will end up writing a minority report."

Jan Doyle [D], who is a member

of the ad hoc committee, also declined comment on the report but praised Thayer and his efforts on behalf of the committee.

RTM member Lonnie Reed, one of the few Democrats to break party ranks and speak out publicly against Town Hall during the investigation, noted that while the report is preliminary, she has strong reservations about its accuracy.

"I respect Scott Thayer and I am hopeful that this preliminary report is still a work in progress. The bottom line is that a bogus granite theft investigation was concocted in an attempt to tarnish a political rival's sterling reputation. This was not instigated by neophytes who didn't know any better. It was instigated by seasoned professionals using town resources," Reed said. "The ad hoc committee's report should clearly censure this conduct and recommend remedies for discouraging such intolerable behavior in the future. I'm convinced that when you soft-pedal this stuff, you only invite new abuses."

Twohill, Prete, and many Republican RTM members are adamant the matter should now be investigated by an independent body from Hartford. Twohill and Prete stated unequivocally that Thayer's assessment of the findings were not their own and that the attorney general or another

independent body with subpoena power should be given the power to investigate.

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal's office had no comment but a spokesperson confirmed that no official from Branford has been in contact with the office concerning the matter.

Twohill also said that there were still investigative matters that the committee needed to delve into before he could sign his name to any report. According to Twohill, information concerning the actual photos, and how and where they were processed, and a possible lead into who actually snapped the infamous pictures, are still being investigated by the committee and that no report should be issued until that evidence is disseminated.

"We ought to resume meetings and continue working," said Twohill. "We have to be diligent about this. The way I see it these proceedings are not over. Half the witnesses didn't show and there is no way we can reach a conclusion on much of what occurred. I take my responsibility and the charge of this committee to heart and it is our duty to get to the truth. In order to get the truth, the people who've refused to come before us need to be questioned. We cannot leave any stone unturned in this matter. People have to know the truth."