



7 Day News Archive:

[Monday](#) |
 [Tuesday](#) |
 [Wednesday](#) |
 [Thursday](#)
[Friday](#) |
 [Saturday](#) |
 [Sunday](#)
AKRON OFFICIAL INDICTED CITY COUNCILMAN ERNIE TARLE, OFFICIALS FROM CANFIELD WELL COMPANY ARE FACING CHARGES OF BRIBERY AFTER GIVING BOARD MEMBER ENVELOPE FULL OF CASH LAST MARCH.

August 11, 1998

Section: METRO

Page: A1

Charlene Nevada, Beacon Journal staff writer, Beacon Journal politics writer Steve Hoffman contributed to this report.

Akron City Councilman Ernie Tarle and two representatives of a Canfield oil and gas well company were indicted yesterday on bribery charges stemming in part from a March incident in which Tarle handed a cash-filled envelope to a fellow councilman.

A Summit County grand jury returned a two-count indictment against Tarle, 33, while Michael Lampers Sr., 53, and Michael Lampers Jr., 30, each face one count of bribery. All three will be arraigned at 8 a.m. Friday in Summit County Common Pleas Court.

The charges are third-degree felonies. If convicted, Tarle would be forced to resign from the Ward 7 seat he has held since January. Convicted felons are barred from holding public office.

"It doesn't make any sense to me," Tarle said yesterday. "It's like a really, really bad dream. I know I did not try to bribe anybody."

An indictment is not a conviction. It simply means a panel of citizens found there is probable cause to believe a crime occurred.

Still, it could have a far-reaching effect because it comes as a local coalition of religious leaders is mounting a petition drive to place a campaign finance-reform issue on the November ballot.

"Typically, campaign finance reform is encouraged by specific incidences of corruption or alleged corruption," said John Green, director of the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron. "It makes it seem real to people."

The Dollars and Democracy proposal would limit contributions to Akron's elected officeholders. For instance, mayoral and at-large Akron City Council candidates would be permitted to receive no more than \$300 from any individual.

The proposal would also stipulate that candidates raise no more than 25 percent of their campaign money from individuals living outside the city and would stiffen disclosure requirements for contributors and their business affiliations.

Three of the four indictments stem from the March 23 incident minutes before a City Council vote on a controversial oil and gas well at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Akron.

In the men's room next to the council chambers, Tarle handed an envelope of cash from Mike Lampers Jr. to colleague Mike Parsons, D-1.

Lampers was at the meeting to represent Everflow Eastern, the Canfield driller seeking zoning approval for the well. Lampers Jr. had given the money to Tarle on behalf of his father, who couldn't attend that night's meeting.

Tarle — who once did leasing work for the Lampers — said he considered the money a campaign contribution. Parsons considered it a bribe. He returned it and went to police, who launched an investigation that culminated in yesterday's indictments.

Attorney Don Varian, who represents both Lampers Sr. and Lampers Jr., said his clients were disappointed in the indictments because they considered the money a campaign contribution.

Varian said the cash in the envelope — the amount has never been made clear — came from four people, including his two clients.

"This was only the second time they had contributed to a campaign," Varian said. "I expect

when all of the evidence is made public, it will be considered a campaign contribution."

Reached yesterday afternoon, Parsons said, "It's been a long journey since March, but after all the spin control that Ernie Tarle and Eastern Overflow put on this, it feels good that an impartial panel of Summit County residents had the opportunity to look at all the evidence and conclude it was an improper attempt to influence my decision-making."

Councilman Bruce Kilby, D-10, who saw Tarle hand Parsons the envelope, declined comment yesterday because he could be called as a witness in a trial.

Earlier, though, he described the situation that led up to the March 23 incident.

The council members had returned from dinner and were getting ready for the meeting. Kilby said Tarle indicated he had needed to speak privately with Parsons, and since Kilby had to use the restroom, they headed there.

Kilby said Tarle opened the stall door to make sure no one was in the restroom before pulling out the envelope of cash and telling Parsons it was from Everflow Eastern.

Parsons did meet with the elder Lampers last November about a campaign contribution. The meeting was set up by Tarle.

During that meeting, there was talk of a contribution. Parsons said Lampers told him the company liked to deal in cash and talked about \$1,000.

Parsons said he told Lampers he would feel compromised by taking \$1,000, but would be willing to accept a cash contribution of up to the legal limit of \$100.

There was no further contact until the night of the meeting. Parsons didn't count the money before returning it.

Summit County Prosecutor Maureen O'Connor said the second count against Tarle stems from an alleged incident last year involving David Reymann, a political rival of Tarle's, as Tarle and Reymann vied to unseat longtime Ward 7 incumbent David Bryant.

According to O'Connor, Tarle allegedly offered half of his city council salary (if he won) to Reymann if Reymann would drop out of the race.

Reymann alleges there were actually two versions of Tarle's proposal. Reymann said Tarle did propose that Reymann drop out of the race. But he said Tarle also offered to drop out himself if Reymann would pay him \$20,000.

As it turned out, Bryant dropped out of the race and retired. Tarle won – and Reymann is now trying to collect enough signatures to trigger a recall election to oust Tarle from office.

"This vindicates me and my efforts," he said.

All content © 1998- The Akron Beacon Journal and may not be republished without permission.



[Shop Local](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Contact Us/Feedback](#)

[About Ohio.com](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [Copyright](#)

AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

© 2007 The Akron Beacon Journal • 44 E. Exchange Street, Akron, Ohio 44308