

Lexington brewery owner’s email prompts questions about Kentucky campaign finance laws

Mckenna Horsley
Kentucky Lantern

An email from a Lexington brewery owner about a Sept. 23 fundraiser for one of the Kentucky legislature's top Republicans has sparked questions about campaign donation laws.

Last week, an email from Andrew Bishop, an owner of Ethereal Brewing, circulated online from a now-deleted Reddit post on the Lexington subreddit. Copies of the email can still be found on other sites, like Facebook. The screenshot did not include recipients of the email, but Bishop referred to an upcoming fundraiser for Rep. Jason Petrie, an Elktion Republican who chairs the House's budget committee.

“We are doing an in-kind donation. I know how sensitive everyone is to donations to politicians, so we’ve made it easier for you. We are donating roughly \$4,500 worth of food, beverage, and rental fee and are asking membership to help by reimbursing us. This way, no one will have to worry about campaign disclosures or

names being associated with this donation,” Bishop wrote, before asking that those receiving the email make checks out to the company’s Public House or pay via Venmo or CashApp.

When asked about the email by the Kentucky Lantern, Bishop said he had been in charge of the legislative affairs for the Kentucky Guild of Brewers for about a month “and had not been fully caught up to speed on the legal aspects of the job.”

Bishop said in an email Wednesday to the Lantern his initial email “was poorly worded and did not reflect the intent of sending it.”

“I have to own my ignorance to what the email was implying and my mistake in sending it, but there was no intent to hide anything nor was anything hidden,” Bishop said. “I sent it to my peers to help offset the costs of highlighting the industry as well as Lexington.”

In their criticism, social media users questioned if the reimbursement process described in the email followed state campaign finance laws. They also debated if Petrie's politics matched those

of liberal Lexington beer scene customers.

“The \$4,500 was a rough max estimate for planning purposes since we did not know the crowd size. The actual in-kind donation (food and beverages) was \$1,134.00,” Bishop continued. “All in-kind contributions were fully disclosed and reported in accordance with all applicable laws. Including providing the itemized invoice of all food and beverages. All in-kind contributions were in accordance with law in regard to being reimbursed by private individuals. As I understand, the financial disclosures will be available publicly to reflect this on the next reporting cycle.”

Bishop emphasized that the fundraiser was “not an Ethereal Brewing event.”

“We were invited to participate in an attempt to highlight the industry and the culture of Lexington,” he said. “The event was a candidate sponsored event in conjunction with the Kentucky Republican Party and as part of highlighting Fayette Co/Lexington. The private event was held at

one of our brewery locations on September 23rd, at our ‘public House’ — we were the venue.”

Adam Hope, a spokesperson for the Republican Party of Kentucky said “the party didn’t host the event” and “it was on behalf of the campaign.” He added “the party was unaware” of Bishop’s initial email shared online and “did not have anything to do with it being sent out.”

Campaign finance rules

John Steffen, the executive director of the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance, said the registry is “certainly aware” of the social media posts, but could not “confirm or deny at this time whether we have received any complaints about it or whether we are investigating the matter” in a Tuesday email to the Lantern.

“Based on the social media post alone, there are certainly concerns about what really transpired, and what, if anything, the candidate himself actually knew about the plans laid out in the post,” Steffen said. “We don’t know whether Rep. Petrie had any involvement in the planning, we

just know what the host posted about the event.”

Steffen said without knowing more about what happened during the fundraiser “some of the concerns would be the fact that corporate contributions to candidates are strictly prohibited, and that the individual contribution limit to candidates is \$3500 per election.”

State law prohibits someone from making a contribution to a political candidate or committee on their behalf, Steffen noted. Another law says that candidates, committees or other political groups “shall not conspire with an individual or other entity to disguise an illegal contribution as an in-kind contribution.”

“So yes, the reimbursement referred to in the email COULD be a violation of campaign finance laws IF they actually took place as described in the email,” he added. “But at this point we still have no idea how things were actually handled or how they will be reported to us.”

Petrie did not return a phone call or emails from the Lantern seeking comment.

Ethereal Brewing also

shared a lengthy post about the situation online Saturday.

“We have heard your concerns and we would like to apologize for the email that was sent out — it was very poorly worded and held a lot of negative implications,” the post said. “We did not do our due diligence in making sure what we’re saying was completely accurate. Our in-kind donation of food and beverage service was disclosed in accordance with the law, but we take full responsibility for the email and any repercussions from it. Period.”

Ahead of the fundraiser, the Fayette County Republican Party posted a flier about the event online, with the words “Paid for by the Jason Petrie Campaign Fund” at the bottom, that included information about how to RSVP and make donations to the campaign.

Petrie is not facing an opponent this fall in the 16th House District, which includes Logan, Todd and part of Christian counties in Western Kentucky.

<https://www.kentuckylantern.com>

Monday is last day to register to vote in Kentucky before November election

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This coming Monday — Oct. 5 — is the last day for Kentuckians to register to vote ahead of the November general election.

Registering can be completed online, via mail or by returning

voter registration cards to your local County Clerk’s office. As of August, the state has about 3.3 million registered voters.

In order to vote next month, online registration must be completed on Monday by 4 p.m. local time. Mailed registrations must be post-

marked by Oct. 5.

The general election is Tuesday, Nov. 3. The ballot will include local and statehouse races, as well as federal elections for the U.S. House and Senate. One constitutional amendment regarding governors’ pardon powers will be on the ballot.

According to the Secretary of State’s Office, the qualifications for voters to register in Kentucky are:

Be a U.S. citizen and a Kentucky resident for at least 28 days before the election. Non-U.S. citizens and U.S. nationals do not qualify.

Be at least 18 years

old by the next general election.

Cannot be a convicted felon. For some with an expungement, executive pardon or executive order, the right to vote may be restored.

Cannot have been judged mentally incompetent in a court of law or have voting rights

removed.

Cannot claim the right to vote outside Kentucky.

To request an absentee ballot or learn more information about voting in Kentucky, visit the online voter information portal.

<https://www.kentuckylantern.com>

Looking back to Oct. 1, 2018

Written by Jonathan Wright

The following information was entered into the Oct. 1, 2018, edition of The Ledger Independent:

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Scavenger hunt held at nature preserve

A cool Saturday morning greeted the adventurous who participated in a scavenger hunt at the Cummins Nature Preserve in Mason County.

As part of the monthly

activities held at the preserve, families and lovers of the outdoors can walk the many trails, given only a compass and a map marking a spot where a prize can be found. Preserve caretaker Grant Felice said the scavenger hunt is a way to test one's skills in navigation.

“We love GPS, and it works great, but there's times where you can't get it, there just is,” Felice said. “You need four satellites to get a good GPS position, and

there are places down in our hollows that you cannot get those satellites.”

Another reason for the event, Felice said, is to get people in the community outside and active. Getting people to be active is behind a lot of the events that are held at the preserve.

“We’re getting people out, and we’re really trying to get people to start changing their lifestyle a little bit, and get out here regularly — start coming out and walking,” he said.

Showing off the preserve, especially by having people walk the trails and incentivised by looking for prizes,



Photo by Terry Prather

Skeeter Shaw makes his rounds to all of the vendors at the Tollesboro Fall Days.

surely comes as a bonus as well.

“Now, at this point, we’ve got about an hour and a half of trails out here to walk,” Felice said. “We’ve completed this entire Deer Scout trail all the way back to the campground, it goes all the way from the guard rail at the front of the preserve, and we’ve got it all the way to the back.”

Scott Stamm, along with his wife, Sarah and son, Jamison, were among the families which walked the trails for the scavenger hunt. Scott Stamm said one of the reasons for coming to the event was because his son is so enthusiastic about the outdoors.

“Jamison, our son, loves to do things outdoors and we’ve always tried to be involved with stuff that Grant does out here. We live close by, so we try to support that,”

Scott Stamm said.

Jamison Stamm, 7, said his favorite thing about the outdoors is seeing all of the wildlife and that going to the scavenger hunt was worth it.

“I like seeing turtles and lizards and all that, it’s so fun,” he said.

The family said they completed their hunt in around 30 minutes, but that didn’t stop them from taking in the sights.

“We took some time to check out some squirrel nesting box, an old chimney we found, so it was more like a little adventure,” Sarah Stamm said.

Also on Saturday, the Tollesboro Fall Days invited folks to enjoy the nice weather and peruse the weekend-long flea market. Skeeter Shaw, organizer of the event, operated his concession booth and served barbe-

cued foods to visitors.

He intends for the event to become an annual gathering.

“We’re working on having four a year here,” he said, “and there’s going to be two in May, one in June, and one at the end of September every year.”

Shaw said the fees for those who open booths at the event all go towards supporting the town and its inhabitants.

“For the vendors that we get, all of the money goes to the Tollesboro Lions Club, which is a good deal,” Shaw said. “They furnish eyeglasses for the kids, and for the community it gives them something to do — there’s not much to do in Tollesboro.”

While starting small, Shaw says he expects the event to grow.

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