

Statement
PRESS RELEASE

Today, I learned that KRIS 6 News reported that I am “the only Corpus Christi appointee currently seeking re-appointment.” This is false. There is another candidate who I know has previously served as a Port Commissioner, and he is seeking re-appointment.

The KRIS 6 News report also states that “two high-level sources tell KRIS 6 News one council member was approached with a bribe.” I do not know who the unidentified sources are. Late yesterday, KRIS 6 News revealed that Councilman Billy Lerma complained of “incidents regarding a candidate seeking [his] support for a re-appointment to the Port Commission.” Councilman Lerma’s statement published by KRIS 6 News does not characterize whatever “incidents” he may be referring to.

I have not been able to learn whether Councilman Billy Lerma made a complaint of a bribe or other inappropriate conduct. I do not know the details of any such complaint. An attorney for the Port reached out to the City’s attorney to ask what council person was making the complaint, who was complained of, and to ask the details of the complaint – but was refused information. I have not been contacted by the Texas Rangers or any others requesting information of me about the “incidents” referenced by Councilman Lerma.

As a Port Commissioner, I am duty bound to update members of the City Council. To do this, I did have lunch with Councilman Lerma on October 27, 2021 (as I routinely do with other members of my appointing body). After lunch, Councilman Lerma texted me: “It’s always a pleasure to talk with you too Rick. Thank you again for lunch and good conversation.” At no other time did we have any real opportunity to discuss my appointment (which we did at lunch). The next week, Councilman Lerma, his wife, and many others attended Driscoll Children’s Hospital Singer-Songwriter Event with me and my family at my invitation. This was purely a social event for all of us. Obviously, the fact that Councilman Lerma enjoyed our conversation at lunch, then attended an evening event with our spouses, and never once suggested any inappropriate conduct for six (6) weeks after our meeting is incredibly troublesome. The timing of Councilman Lerma’s complaint makes me question whether there are political motivations on his part to help his self-described “lifelong friend”, Mr. Kenneth Berry, who is competing against me for re-appointment to the Port Commission.

I am certain that I did not make any inappropriate comment or offer to Councilman Lerma (not at any time). Some unidentified person (or persons) obviously leaked a false story to KRIS 6 News (for their political gain). I will be asking for a full investigation to ascertain the identities of all persons who participated with KRIS 6 News and social media to smear my name. I will be evaluating all legal remedies available to me. I sincerely hope that KRIS 6 News and others report the results of any investigation with the same vigor.