

## KNEWS' John McMullen Speaks with Freedom

*Desert Hot Springs, CA* – The protections afforded us as **American** are clearly spelled out in our foundational documents, especially the **U.S. Constitution** and the **Bill of Rights**. The freedoms that are near and dear to my heart as both a citizen and a career journalist are embedded in the fabric of our great nation.

In looking at the state of local politics here in the **Coachella Valley**, in particular the cities of **Desert Hot Springs** and **Indian Wells**, it now seems a cruel joke that President Ronald Reagan in his farewell address to the nation would choose to use this metaphor to describe the greatness of the United States:



***“America is a shining city upon a hill whose beacon light guides freedom-loving people everywhere.”***

**–President Ronald Reagan**

The people we elected to act as the guardians of the public trust have violated their oath of office by their obstructionist tactics and have spurned the vows they took to uphold all laws that govern their local jurisdiction – from the federal down to the municipal level.

Thus, I am heartened by the “take no prisoners” approach the broadcasters at **KNEWS Radio** (94.3 FM) have taken in dealing with any and all government officials caught trampling the press freedoms which are essential to the very life of any democracy.

The following is the transcript of KNEWS' **Director of Programming and Operations** comments at the recent Desert Hot Springs (DHS) city council meeting.

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### DHS City Council Meeting

*Tuesday, November 15, 2011*

**John McMullen:** “Good evening. I’m John McMullen and I am the Director of Programming and Operations at KNEWS radio in Palm Springs. Seventeen days ago I wrote to each of you, the esteemed members of this council, as well as the city manager, the assistant city manager, the city attorney, and the chief of police. The report that was issued by the city along with some of the mysterious findings, or lack thereof, regarding the city’s vendor Chryss Home Automation was the topic.

There were so many unanswered questions and new ones raised, including why this investigation and report were produced by city staff who had a vested stake in its outcome rather than an independent third party. But my questions had to do specifically with why the city clerk himself lumped all three enterprises that Peter Chryssicos was involved with together as one continuous enterprise. And why every official continues to make reference to Mr. Chryssicos by a fictitious name, Peter Chryss, who does not exist.

Only one person who I addressed these matters with responded to me. And that person was council member Betts. Apparently the rest of you did not feel that you did feel a responsibility to be accountable to the people who entrust you to this office. And I can tell you that as I speak with source after source on this story and with the plethora of people within this municipality who call my office every week, people are not happy about the efforts within the halls of city hall to close the public off from information that they are entitled to. You have a criminal who, by the way, is in violation (of) not only civil and criminal statutes in the state for his unlawful operation of his security alarm monitoring business, but is continuing to operate in an unlawful manner in your municipality.

I think that Councilman Baker, I actually feel some empathy for him, since our source this week came forward and brought us evidence that Mr. Baker did not sign any of those checks that he is reported to have endorsed. In fact, they were forged by Mr. Chryssicos. Why is this not being investigated by the police

department in this town? I don't understand that. But I also have a couple of direct questions. Councilmember Pye and Councilmember Matas: Can you please tell us on the record if at any time the services of Mr. Chrysticos or his business have been provided at either of your residences or at any business that you have a ownership interest in.

Finally, Madam Mayor, I know that you have a good relationship with some of the people on my staff, and a probably less than great relationship with others. And you have been a guest on our air on many occasions. And I respect the position of your office and the difficulty that some of these situations sometimes present for you and for your fellow members here on the city council. But I received a number of comments after—

**DHS City Attorney Ruben Duran:** "Madam Mayor three minutes."

**Duran:** "Madam Mayor, the speaker's time has elapsed."

**Mayor Yvonne Parks:** "Oh, your three minutes are up Mr. McMullen."

**McMullen:** "Okay."

**Parks:** "Thank you."

**McMullen:** "Thank you very much. Please quit being a gossipmonger about us. Mr. Rayburn's job is not in jeopardy."

**Parks:** "Thank you."

*The gavel was slammed down on McMullen at exactly three minutes after he began his comments. It appears the Mayor and her minions were not interested in hearing the truth being clearly articulated to them by a career journalist and the not-so-subtle warning dispensed by his demanding they stop what appears to be yet another episode of illegal conduct. It is truly mystifying how ignorant of reality the majority of this DHS body politic insists on remaining. It is hard to know what will finally get their attention.*

*McMullen appeared as a guest on "The Lee Rayburn Show" (KNEWS 94.3 FM M-F 3 to 6 p.m.) the following day to discuss the comments he made before the city council, discuss anti-SLAPP laws, and to read the rest of his prepared statement to listeners.*

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## "The Lee Rayburn Show"

Wednesday, Nov. 16, 2011

**McMullen:** "I had to really abbreviate the last two paragraphs I had of my note. When I got cut-off in the middle of the first one, so can I just read those three paragraphs?"

**Rayburn:** "No! You're three minutes are up. (Laughs.) Go ahead."

**McMullen:** "And finally, Madam Mayor, I have received numerous phone calls and emails from people who you have made outlandish remarks about my radio station and staff to. I highly suggest you consult with an attorney or at least a dictionary and get a clear indication of what constitutes libel, slander and defamation before you freely dispense with your remarks about Lee Rayburn, his show, my station, or the veracity of the information we disseminate on our airwaves. You Ms. Parks have conducted yourself more in the manner of a socialite gossipmonger than with the class and distinction one would come to expect from a mayor of a city the size of DHS. I am here to assure you that Mr. Rayburn's employment has never been more secure here than it is tonight. Hopefully Mr. Daniels will get that message loud and clear before he calls in another favor with his personal attorney to intimidate our radio station into quote unquote "shutting up" by taking on Mr. Chrysticos as a client. That's right. We know what's going on and I trust that by the time this plays itself out you'll all be more than aware of what the anti-SLAPP laws of this state are all about. Goodnight."

**Rayburn:** "John, what are these anti-SLAPP laws you're speaking of."

**McMullen:** "Well, California has some of the toughest laws that are meant as teeth to help protect people who are the subject of efforts by others to trample or impede their First Amendment rights. And, there are some organizations here in the state, in fact there's one completely dedicated to the anti-SLAPP laws who I'm hoping you might actually have on the program very soon.

Because this is a free speech zone. There are people who call your show, and any show on our station, who

disagree with yours or mine, or any other person, a guest's point of view. And one of the things we have done with this radio station is make clear that there is not all one point of view on it. Unlike a lot of talk radio, Lee, as you well know, we have people who are all across the political spectrum.

People who don't even like politics, and whatnot. So, I want to create an environment here where people can feel safe to come and disagree with each other, but where we have a dialogue as the community that we are, which you do each and every afternoon. So, that said, the anti-SLAPP laws help put some teeth back into the fight against people who would otherwise try and force people to shut the hell up."

**Rayburn:** "By, I don't know, employing the attorney for the city manager of Desert Hot Springs to represent a man who does not exist? And then send us legal threats?"

**McMullen:** "Who might sort of exist."

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*I look forward to the day that the residents of DHS step forward and share the comments I read daily on news blogs about their disgust and hatred of the status quo in the city. It will take a consistent, concerted effort by all interested parties to effect change here.*

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