



PRESS RELEASE

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Private Investigator Hired by Costa Mesa Police Union [Pleads Guilty to Four Criminal Charges](#) In Case Arising From Alleged Harassment and Intimidation of Costa Mesa City Councilmen Jim Righeimer and Steve Mensinger

Costa Mesa Police Association Private Investigator Christopher Joseph Lanzillo Pleads Guilty to Charges Which Include False Imprisonment Effected by Violence, Menace Fraud or Deceit

Attorneys representing Costa Mesa City Councilmen Jim Righeimer, Steve Mensinger and their families responded to four guilty pleas by Christopher Lanzillo, a private investigator hired by a law firm representing the Costa Mesa Police Association, a public employee union. On Wednesday, September 28, Lanzillo pled guilty in Orange County Superior Court to three counts of Conspiracy to Commit a Crime and one count of False Imprisonment Effected by Violence, Menace Fraud or Deceit.

Councilmen Righeimer, Mensinger and their families are suing the Costa Mesa Police Association for alleged union harassment, intimidation and other illegal acts.

“The guilty pleas by Lanzillo reaffirm the principle that police union thuggery, harassment and intimidation against public officials will not be tolerated. We look forward to taking this case to trial and receiving just compensation for our clients and their families,” said John Manly, a partner in the Irvine California based law firm Manly, Stewart & Finaldi.

Costa Mesa Mayor Jim Righeimer and City Councilman Steve Mensinger have sued the Costa Mesa Police Association, their law firm and Lanzillo alleging a vicious campaign of harassment and intimidation tied to labor negotiations between the City of Costa Mesa and the police union in 2012.

It is alleged that the union, their law firm and Lanzillo engaged in a scheme to falsely accuse Mayor Righeimer of driving under the influence and unsuccessfully attempted to lure

married Councilman Mensinger into a compromising position with a female “decoy” in a bar.

Plaintiffs alleged Lanzillo’s actions were part of a “scheme” by defendants “to follow” James Righeimer and Mensinger“ on August 22, 2012 and illegally entrap them.”

According to the complaint, Lanzillo called 911 and reported Righeimer for driving under the influence when he left a restaurant/bar to drive home. Subsequent investigation revealed that Councilman Righeimer had only consumed soft drinks at the restaurant.

Councilman Righeimer left the restaurant/bar and drove home. After he arrived, a police officer knocked on the front door of the residence. The officer asked Righeimer whether he had consumed alcohol and conducted a short field sobriety test. Satisfied that Righeimer was not intoxicated, the officer left the residence. Righeimer’s wife, Lene Righeimer saw a man in a car parked down the street from their home that allegedly fit the description of Lanzillo. As the man began to drive away, she stepped into the street in front of his vehicle. When the vehicle stopped, Lene Righeimer asked the driver to identify himself. The driver said, “oh, please,” and drove away. The original complaint alleged the vehicle “came so close to [Righeimer] that she felt the heat of the tire and the wind of the car’s movement as it passed, putting her in imminent fear of grave bodily harm.” In a declaration, Lene Righeimer stated, “I believed that the driver intended to, and was going to, run me over.”

Reports about James Righeimer’s alleged drunk driving and Lanzillo’s 911 call appeared in the local news media. The news reports included several comments attributed to Lanzillo. He purportedly stated that he had been “hired to ‘tail’ and ‘gather dirt’ on” council members, including Righeimer and Mensinger.

Further investigation revealed that a police quality GPS tracking device had been placed on Councilman Mensinger’s car and remained there throughout his re-election campaign.

“Mayor Righeimer and Councilman Mensinger are not suing the police department, the City of Costa Mesa or any individual police officers. They are suing a rogue union that used illegal tactics to bully them in contract negotiations. It is now evident that these tactics included criminal activity,” said attorney Vince Finaldi.

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[About Manly, Stewart & Finaldi](#)

Manly, Stewart & Finaldi is a law firm based in Irvine, California, which specializes in representing victims of bullying, intimidation and sexual abuse. Through trial and settlement, Manly, Stewart & Finaldi have assisted in the recovery of more than a billion dollars for their victims.