

City pays weekly for tax list it copied, ran on own

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It's a novel way to make money.

Make copies of advertisements from one newspaper. Run the photocopied ads in your newspaper. Send the advertiser a bill and then watch the money roll in.

That's essentially what the Urban Times News, a free weekly distributed in Jersey City and Newark, did with legal ads for a city tax lien sale that originally ran in The Jersey Journal.

Bobby Jackson, the politically connected publisher of the African American weekly, acknowledges his newspaper published ads copied from The Jersey Journal. The only caveat Jackson added is that Carl Czaplicki, chief of staff for Jersey City Mayor Jerramiah Healy, told him it was all right.

But there's a problem with that explanation: Czaplicki says he never spoke to Jackson about the ads before they ran in his

newspaper. Jackson couldn't be reached to respond to that assertion.

Nonetheless, the Urban Times is getting paid. The City Council voted last Tuesday to shell out \$15,300 — \$1,100 more than it paid The Jersey Journal — to pay the Urban Times for twice running the photocopied ads even though the second Urban Times ad ran the same day as the actual sale, June 28.

Czaplicki said he learned about the Urban Times request for payment when the city's tax collector, Maureen Cosgrove, received the unexpected bill.

A June 21 e-mail Cosgrove sent to several city officials, including Czaplicki, stated: "It has come to my attention that the Urban Times has published the Jersey City Tax Sale List scheduled for tax sale on June 28th. I did not authorize the publication. I did not send them the list.

"Based on the City Council resolution, they are not author-



THE MASTHEAD of the Urban Times News.

ized to run our publication and do not meet the standards under state guidelines," she added.

According to state law, the city has to publish tax lien sale ads in a publication that is sold and also runs ads for city ordinances. The Urban Times is free and doesn't run the ads for city ordinances, city officials said. The city is permitted, however, to run additional ads in non-qualifying publications if it chooses, city attorneys said.

Eight days after receiving Cosgrove's memo, Czaplicki sent her a one-sentence e-mail: "Please be advised that the City of Jersey City, Tax Collector's Office may utilize the Urban

Times publication for public notices."

Czaplicki said last week his e-mail to Cosgrove had to do with city ads in general.

About the tax sale ads, Czaplicki said he told Cosgrove she should pay for the first Urban Times ad, which ran on June 22 — even though no city official authorized it. But it was up to her whether she wanted to pay for the second ad that ran the day of the sale. Cosgrove didn't call back to comment.

At a council caucus Sept. 10, Ward E Councilman Steve Fulop blasted the payment as "political payback" for Jersey City Mayor Jerramiah Healy, noting Jackson was campaign manager

for state Senate Democratic nominee Sandra Cunningham.

After a well-publicized rapprochement between Healy and Cunningham this summer, Healy's picture and press releases started showing up with regularity in the weekly.

In a statement, Healy responded: "Is Steve Fulop suggesting that we deny our free local weekly publications the ability to disseminate important public information by only advertising in The Jersey Journal?"

Jackson suggested Fulop was being racist. "His undergarment is showing," Jackson quipped in an earlier interview, referring to Fulop. "Steve Fulop's philosophy is to make sure minority businesses don't do any business."

Fulop responded he is seeking equal treatment for every minority publication, not just this "political newspaper."

"It is taxpayers' dollars that the mayor is using as his personal political piggy bank," Fulop added.