

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INTIMIDATION AND CHALLENGES TO RESIDENTS FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS RUNNING RAMPANT IN RUN UP TO NOVEMBER ELECTION IN ROYAL OAK

Royal Oak business owners want to contribute to challengers for city commission but afraid to, fearing retribution by Mayor Fournier and city officials.

ROYAL OAK, Mich., October 28, 2019 — Suppression of the voice of city residents and taxpayers is ratcheting up with two weeks before one of the most heated elections in Royal Oak's history. The intimidation, retribution and squashing of First Amendment Rights began shortly after the 2017 mayoral election but have been widespread leading up to the vote in this November.

In 2017, after Randy LeVasseur and Kim Gibbs were elected, the mayor and majority changed the rules to require three commissioners to propose an agenda item for commission meetings, eliminating the voice of the minority to speak for the people of Royal Oak. More importantly, public comment was reduced from five-to-three-minutes at commission meetings, frustrating many residents who desired to object to no-bid contracts and out-of-control spending.

"Immediately after the 2017 election, a city contractor showed up and removed more than 20 large beautiful trees from my front yard in what could only have been interpreted as retaliation for running against Fournier for Mayor," said Mike Skinner. "A primary reason I ran was because I opposed removing trees for sidewalks. But what really ticked me off was the abuse of city fire personnel on election day in 2017. After two hours of training, they were then told to go hold signs in support of Fournier and the incumbents all over the city."

Skinner added he feels for current Mayoral Candidate Stephen Miller who is experiencing personal attacks brought about by Mayor Fournier and commission majority spokesman Jim Rasor, a local attorney.

"Rasor's manipulation of the media to dredge up the past is just a low blow," said Skinner. "If the media really want a story, they should ask Rasor about his past domestic violence incidents, or the individual dumping campaign signs from most of the challengers in Rasor's office dumpster as caught on surveillance video. It's sickening and I've had enough of all the shenanigans happening in city hall and have chosen to move out of Royal Oak."

An analysis of campaign financing from the 2017 election shows Mayor Fournier and his slate raised more than \$120,000. That being more than twice of the three challengers, and the most ever in a Royal Oak municipal election. In 2019, it is anticipated Fournier and his slate of Pat Paruch, Kyle DeBuc and Belem Morales will raise even more than in 2017, and five times more than the self-funded, resident and small donor campaigns by Miller, Tom Hallock and Randy LeVasseur.

"I've been told by a lot of business owners and others in Royal Oak that they would like to contribute to the campaign, but they are afraid to, for fear of retribution. That's because they've witnessed people speaking out at public comment in city meetings only to be rewarded with code enforcement inspections, violations and other harassment," said Miller. "Today's the deadline to file the latest round of campaign financing with the county and I'm certain the numbers for Fournier and majority will be four times what we've raised."

Miller added that Fournier’s past track record of late and incomplete filings and fines is more than any other previous mayoral candidate.

The Take Back Royal Oak Coalition, a First Amendment group aimed at educating and informing the public about city matters has further information and examples of intimidation by commissioners and candidates at www.TakeBackRoyalOak.com and on our YouTube channel at <http://bit.ly/2PqdEh4>, including Mayor Fournier notes calling a citizen “moron” and threatening to have the IRS investigate those who spoke up at public comment. Commissioner DeBuc suggested at the Sept. 23, 2019 commission meeting that the Mayor or commission should “shut down” someone speaking at public comment – in violation of his or her First Amendment Rights.

###

Contact: David J. Roznowski, APR
Kinetic Communications Marketing, LLC
droznowski@kinetic-llc.com
248-550-6620