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Braun says son's job with city is not an issue

City manager repeats legal advice of no conflict

By Peter D'Sa and Alex Buller
Abbotsford News

Coun. Henry Braun told the audience at Thursday's mayoral debate that his son's position in Abbotsford's planning department would not put him in a conflict of interest were he elected mayor.

Braun's statement came in response to a question from the audience. He said it's not the first time he's been asked the question.

Braun's son, Darren, is director of development planning at the city. He worked at the city prior to Braun's election three years ago.

Braun said his son is "three levels below" the city manager's position, who is the only employee who reports to council.

"I don't have anything to do with anyone in any other department," he said. A councillor who tried to influence a staff member would be ordered not to do so by the city manager, he said.



BRAUN

"He doesn't ask me what's going on at council, I don't ask him about what's going on in the planning department."

Braun said he would continue to excuse himself from any discussions regarding his son's salary or any other potential conflict, but that the situation itself would remain as it has since Braun was elected.

"He doesn't report to me," Braun said. "Our job is policy and gov-

ernance. I don't know how that can conflict with any employee, other than salary-related."

"For the first two years and nine months, conflict was never an issue. I just find it interesting that it is now all of a sudden when I'm running for mayor."

On Saturday, Corpus Management Group (CMG) issued a news release requesting the city examine the possibility of a conflict of interest between the two and obtain a legal opinion.

CMG has put forward a proposal to develop a new Agrn-Centre to centralize agricultural equipment dealers at Atkinson and Eldridge roads in Abbotsford.

CMG has also re-

quested that Coun. Braun recuse himself from any business related to the Agri-Centre until the legal opinion is obtained.

City manager George Murray had previously addressed the issue of a potential conflict after it was raised at a public hearing on a rezoning proposal earlier this year.

He repeated his statement to the The News on Monday, saying legal advice from city lawyers at the time was that the "councillor is unlikely to have either a conflict of interest or a reasonable apprehension of bias, simply because his son is the director of planning and has recommended that council approve a rezoning application."