



## **Washtenaw County Democratic Party**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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### **For Immediate Release**

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### **State House Candidate Accused of Misconduct** Party Chairman Calls For Investigation

ANN ARBOR, Michigan, October 7, 2010 – Washtenaw County Democratic Party Chairman Stu Dowty today called for an investigation into what he described as “thousands of dollars of fees and expenses that Republican County Commissioner Mark Ouimet improperly collected from Washtenaw County government funds.” Involved are nearly \$35,000 in meeting attendance fees and mileage reimbursements that Ouimet has claimed in his nearly six years as a Commissioner.

The issue came to light at Wednesday night’s meeting of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners. Local attorney Thomas Wieder, citing information obtained from the county through the Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), presented evidence to the Commissioners that a significant portion of the fees and mileage that Ouimet has claimed and received should not have been paid to him.

Under County rules, Commissioners are entitled to be paid \$25 for attending certain meetings of the Commission and its committees, as well as a specific list of

County boards, commissions and committees on which Commissioners serve with members of the public. To be eligible for payment, the meeting must be of a body that a Commissioner was appointed to by the Board or its Chair.

Since he joined the Board in 2005, Ouimet has claimed meeting fees totaling \$25,925 for attending 1037 meetings, and mileage reimbursement of about \$9000. This is in addition to his annual Board salary of \$15,500. On some occasions, he claimed as many as four meeting fees on the same day.

“A large percentage of the meetings that Ouimet got paid for weren’t eligible. They weren’t meetings of the Board, its committees or any of the approved county boards, commissions and committees,” Dowty said. “He claimed payments for all sorts of meetings and activities that aren’t covered – literally hundreds of meetings of township boards that he doesn’t serve on, informal discussions with members of the county staff, even meetings with The Ann Arbor News and AnnArbor.com.”

“It probably served Ouimet’s personal political agenda to show up and shake hands at all sorts of meetings around the county where he had no official role, but county taxpayers shouldn’t be paying for this,” Dowty said. Ouimet is running against Democrat Christine Green, a Scio Township Trustee, for the seat currently held by State Representative Pam Byrnes.

“There must be a thorough and independent investigation conducted to determine how much Ouimet improperly collected,” Dowty said. “It’s clearly in the thousands of dollars. It certainly raises serious questions about whether Ouimet is fit for the public position that he presently holds, let alone the bigger one that he’s trying to get.”

Dowty suggested that either Washtenaw County Prosecutor Brian Mackie, or the Michigan State Police, should conduct the investigation. “There’s certainly the possibility of criminal fraud, here,” Dowty said.

Ouimet briefly addressed the controversy at the end of Wednesday’s meeting. He did not dispute the accuracy of the figures Wieder presented to the Board or claim that all of the payments were justified, saying only that what he called “discrepancies” should be examined. He also claimed that he gives all the money he receives from the county to charity.

Dowty said that Ouimet’s claim of giving the money to charity was “self-serving nonsense. How could we possibly know what he did with the money? In any event, he doesn’t get to improperly take money from county taxpayers and give it to the causes of his choice.”

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