

Jake Austin <jpa@jacobaustinesq.com> To: matthew@shapiro.legal Sun, May 27, 2018 at 8:51 PM

Matt,

I am writing because I have been made aware of several facts which lead me to believe it is possible you have engaged in a civil conspiracy with your client, Mr. Aaron Magagna, to violate the rights of my client, Mr. Darryl Cotton.

On or around March 12, 2018, I went to Judge Wohlfeil's courtroom and when I entered I saw that you were one seat to the left of Mr. Cotton and his litigation investor who were speaking about the <u>Larry Geraci v. Darryl Cotton</u> matter. As I am sure you are aware, as I know you work extensively with Mrs. Gina Austin, Mrs. Austin has represented Mr. Geraci in the <u>Geraci v. Cotton</u> matter and is an adverse party to Mr. Cotton. Further, Mr. Cotton has filed a federal lawsuit against, among other parties, Mr. Geraci, Mrs. Austin and Mr. Michael Weinstein (Mr. Geraci's counsel in the <u>Geraci v. Cotton</u> case).

Thus, when I walked into the courtroom and saw that you were in casual clothes (the first time I have ever seen you not wearing a suit at court), I was concerned because the Courtroom was predominantly empty and you could have sat anywhere. Yet, you were sitting next to my client and you have a strong relationship with Mrs. Austin.

I sat down between you and Mr. Cotton and his litigation investor. I asked you why you were there and you stated you were "scoping out" Judge Wohlfeil to "see how he rules" in preparation for a case in front of him. Later, you called me and left a voicemail, asking me to speak with you.

This last week, two issues arose that are the catalyst for this email. First, there is strong evidence to support Mr. Cotton's belief that Mr. Geraci hired an engineering company to make a recommendation to the City of San Diego that they deny Mr. Cotton's pending Marijuana Outlet CUP application on the real property that is the main subject matter of the Geraci v. Cotton case. You should know that when the field personnel were at the property and did two borings, each of which was supposed to be for 50 feet, one only made it to 9 feet and the second only made it to 13 feet before the drill bits broke because the property is essentially on a big rock. The geologist for the engineering company explicitly stated that there are absolutely no problems and they would recommend an approval.

Last week, Mr. Cotton called to confirm with the geologist who was the lead and performed the borings. That person was very anxious and refused to confirm that the drill bits broke at 9 and 13 feet and insinuated that the recommendation would be for a denial. Upon confirmation, if such happens, and the engineering company recommends a denial, Mr. Cotton will hire a third-party engineering company to do his own independent soils sample to confirm the property is suitable for building. Then he will amend his complaint to include the engineering company as part of a civil conspiracy by Mr. Geraci to sabotage the CUP application on the subject property in an effort to mitigate his damages to Mr. Cotton. Again, they were supposed to bore to 50 feet and hit rock at 9 and 13 feet. Mr. Cotton has already contacted another company to do the soils testing to expose the engineering company and prove that any recommendation for a denial is unsupported.

<u>Second</u>, and more pertinent to you, Mr. Cotton was made aware that a competing CUP application had been filed in March of 2018 and that the owner of the competing CUP application is Mr. Magagna, your client. Attached here as

Exhibit 1 is a Notice of Application by the City of San Diego reflecting that Mr. Magagna is applying for a CUP (Project No. 598124) at a property within 1,000 feet of Mr. Cotton's property; attached here as **Exhibit 2** are Articles of Incorporation for a Mutual Benefit Corporation named A-M Industries, Inc. that you formed for Mr. Magagna filed on November 4, 2014; attached as **Exhibits 3 and 4** are Statements of Information filed with the Secretary of State of the State of California for A-M Industries, Inc. dated December 2, 2014 and July 6, 2017, respectively; and attached as **Exhibit 5** are Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation for A-M Industries, Inc. filed on February 16, 2018.

Here is the bottom line, notwithstanding the procedural history of the case between Mr. Geraci and Mr. Cotton, Mr. Geraci is going to lose. His only goal is to mitigate his damages. He can only do that by making it impossible for Mr. Cotton to have a CUP application approved on the property and he can only accomplish that by having another CUP approved within 1,000 feet of Mr. Cotton's property.

So, to summarize, it appears likely the engineering company is going to go back on its explicit stated intent to recommend an approval and is going to make a recommendation for a denial. And, even though Mr. Cotton can get another soils sample via another CUP application, it now appears that it would be a futile task as there is another CUP application being processed within 1,000 feet of his property. By the time he got a new CUP application submitted, Mr. Magagna's CUP application could be approved and Mr. Cotton's new CUP application will be disqualified.

I think you already know this. It defies reason and common sense to believe that you "accidentally" sat down next to Mr. Cotton when you have a strong relationship with Mrs. Austin and Mr. Magagna and did so in casual clothes.

As to Mr. Magagna, why would any reasonable businessman file a CUP application that according to all public information, and even the declarations of Mr. Geraci's own experts, is expected to get approved? Mr. Cotton's application has been under review for over a year; no reasonable person would, unless that person is privy to information that steps are being taken to unlawfully sabotage Mr. Cotton's CUP application. As noted above, it is clear the engineering company has been compromised and, thus, provides motive for Mr. Magagna to submit a CUP – he knew ahead of time that Mr. Cotton's application would be unjustly denied.

Matt, again, it is simply impossible that you do not know the above. However, we have known each other for years and I would like to believe that you do <u>not</u> know the following – there is more than probable cause to support Mr. Cotton's allegations that Mr. Geraci has sent third-parties to physically threaten him and his litigation investor. These allegations will be the subject of the federal lawsuit filed by Mr. Cotton against Mr. Geraci, Mrs. Austin, and Mr. Weinstein alleging causes of action that include RICO and Civil Conspiracy arising from Mr. Geraci's attempt to deprive Mr. Cotton of an equity stake in the contemplated dispensary. And the most reasonable deduction is that Mr. Geraci is the individual ultimately behind Mr. Magagna's CUP application that would, if approved, make it impossible for Mr. Cotton to get a CUP application approved on his property. The federal action is stayed now, but upon going live Mr. Cotton will seek to amend his federal complaint and add you and Mr. Magagna as co-defendants to that action as well.

I realize that you may originally have started on this course of action not understanding the full scope of what is taking place. And I am not going to lay out the elements of a conspiracy, but I trust you understand that if Mr. Cotton prevails, you and Mr. Magagna will also be vicariously liable for all actions taken as part of the conspiracy, including the RICO causes of action that will be adjudicated in the federal lawsuit.

We have known each other for a while and have helped each other out on occasion, so I am going to be straight with you – again, Geraci is going to lose. Attached here as **Exhibit 6**, is an appeal that Mr. Cotton submitted himself last week and which was denied. It's a ridiculous *pro se* mess, incorrect legal citations and incorrect citations to exhibits that do not even exist. BUT, the facts and the law he raises in the memo are true and are accurate. I am filing a motion for a

judgement on the pleadings based on the same principles (I researched them, but I did not want to file for an extraordinary writ with the Court of Appeals so he did it himself *pro se* against my advice).

Mr. Geraci will lose. Mrs. Austin made false factual representations to the trial court. And you have a strong relationship with Mrs. Austin and Mr. Magagna... sitting down next to Mr. Cotton and his litigation investor in a predominantly empty courtroom and being able to eavesdrop is extremely suspicious. Are you going to argue that this was pure happenstance and just a coincidence?

To me, this appears to be a textbook case of a conspiracy. I am ethically obligated in the defense of Mr. Cotton's rights to bring forth a motion seeking to add you and Mr. Magagna as co-defendants pursuant to CCP § 1714.10 to expose the conspiracy and to prevent Mr. Geraci from depriving Mr. Cotton of a CUP at his property. It is clear that the goal is to have Mr. Cotton's CUP denied based on the recommendation from the engineering company, thus, ALL attention will focus on proving the CUP application submitted by Mr. Magagna is directly connected to Mr. Geraci and Mrs. Austin with you being the obvious tie-in. Your actions by sitting next to Mr. Cotton and your relationship with Mrs. Austin and Mr. Magagna are more than probable cause to bring forth a conspiracy cause of action. I suspect that discovery will probably also reveal that Mr. Jim Bartell has been behind the scenes supporting the CUP application for Mr. Magagna with the City of San Diego. See Chicago Title Ins. Co. v. Great Western Financial Corp. (1968) 69 Cal.2d 305, 316 ("The advantage to the pleader in charging a conspiracy is to implicate all participating in the common design and thus fasten liability on him who agreed to the plan to commit the wrong as well as on him who actually carried it out. [Citations.] The conspiracy 'may be inferred from the nature of the acts done, the relations of the parties, the interests of the alleged conspirators, and other circumstances.' [Citations.]")

If I have this wrong, please let me know. I really don't want to take this course of action. On this note, please provide the case number of the matter that you are working on in front of Judge Wohlfeil and which was the basis of you "scoping [him] out" when you sat down next to Mr. Cotton.

Lastly, even if you are already in too deep to get out, you should really inform Mr. Magagna of the totality of the circumstances here and the full extent of the liability that he is being exposed to – I can't imagine that he is aware of the physical assaults and intimidation attempts by Mr. Geraci that I believe will be proven as part of Mr. Cotton's RICO cause of action and for which he would be held liable as well. Mr. Cotton alleges that he has been told that Mr. Magagna is a "vendor" that sells to unlicensed dispensaries. If this allegation is true, I sincerely doubt your client would want to be a named co-defendant in a legal action that encompasses criminal threats, intimidation and be subject to discovery that would probe this allegation, his activities and his sources of income that he is using to pay for the CUP application.

If I do not hear back from you by close of business on Tuesday, May 29, 2018, I will assume you will stick to a story of "accidentally" sitting next to Mr. Cotton and that you have nothing to do with Mr. Magagna's CUP application and I will proceed accordingly.

- Jacob

P.S. Mr. Cotton and his litigation investors are renegotiating the terms of their deal(s) and are negotiating with several large practices that have the bandwidth and resources to see this case through and then follow-up on malicious prosecution cases against Mr. Geraci, Mrs. Austin and Mr. Weinstein on a contingency basis. I have reviewed the pleadings they have been submitting over the last year and they have all made obvious false statements to the court – do not trust them to look out for you or to protect you when everything gets exposed.

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6 attachments

- EXHIBIT 1_4-5-18 6220 Fed Blvd DSD Notice of Application.pdf 362K
- EXHIBIT 2_A-M IND ARTICLES OF INCORP 11-04-14.pdf
- EXHIBIT 3_A-M IND STA OF INFO 12-2-14.pdf
- EXHIBIT 4_A-M IND STA OF INFO 7-6-17.pdf
- EXHIBIT 5_A-M IND AMENDED ARTICLES OF INCORP 02-16-18.pdf 51K
- EXHIBIT 6_Petition for WoM re LP Motion & POS FILED 05-21-18.pdf 528K



Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> To: Jake Austin <ipa@jacobaustinesq.com>

Sun, May 27, 2018 at 10:33 PM

Jake-

You do have this wrong. I don't wear a suit to Court unless I'm appearing on a matter in front of a judge. Much of the information you've referenced is part of public record i.e. pending litigation between Geraci and Cotton. The information you've shared with me about the drill bits and rock underneath the property is the most privy to information that is not on public record that I've had in relation to this application/lawsuit. Also, why on earth would I call you to have a conversation if I was conspiring against you and/or your client? Finally, and I'm not certain about this as I'm only beginning to dip my toes in this land use/licensing area of practice, it is my understanding that the geologists don't actually give approval or denial recommendations to the City.

That said, I'm not looking to be dragged into this mess, especially undeservedly so. Let's look to have a conversation Tuesday but as we are both busy professionals I ask that you give me a reasonable amount of time early next week to have this conversation with you.

-Matt

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Matthew Shapiro Law Office of Matthew Shapiro 7676 Hazard Center Dr, Suite 500 San Diego, CA 92108

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CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:



Jake Austin djacobaustinesq.com>
To: Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal>

Mon, May 28, 2018 at 11:21 AM

Matt,

To be honest, I find your response unpersuasive.

First, although I'm totally with you on the suit without a hearing issue, I just find it impossible to believe that given your multi-year relationships with Mrs. Austin and Mr. Magagna, that it was a "coincidence" that you sat next to Mr. Cotton and his litigation investor.

Second, you did not provide the case number in front of Judge Wohlfeil that you were supposedly preparing for. Please provide the case number by 3pm, or I will believe that your request for time is meant to be a search for cases in front of Judge Wohlfeil with an attorney that you can associate yourself with. Though you may think this is excessive on my part, if you truly are not aware of what is going on, I can guarantee that if you knew half of what I know about the actions taken by everyone related to Mr. Geraci, especially his counsel, you would be extremely cautious as well.

Third, as to why you called me, because up until that point in time, I was not attorney-of-record and you did not know that I was associated with Mr. Cotton. You did not know that someone that recognizes you as being closely associated with an adverse party to Mr. Cotton (Mrs. Austin) would show up and see you sitting next to Mr. Cotton. I did not call you back specifically because I was leery of your relationship with Mrs. Austin. It is much more reasonable to assume that after you found out I was associated with Mr. Cotton, you called to potentially find out additional or privileged information or misdirect me. This is more plausible than you accidentally sitting next to Mr. Cotton and his litigation investor, especially if you lied to me about being before Judge Wohlfeil preparing for a case when you have no client in front of him.

Fourth, setting aside whether the geologist's test results lead to a recommendation or not, objectively speaking, it makes no sense for a reasonable party to submit a CUP on a property within 1,000 feet of Mr. Cotton's property. By all accounts, the CUP application on Mr. Cotton's property is on the cusp of approval. You say you are just "dipping" your toes into land use regulation. Well, I think we both know enough about the land-use regulations and the competitive market for Marijuana Outlet eligible properties over the last year; and I can state unequivocally that Mr. Magagna is not going to be able to reasonably justify his submission of a CUP application given the information available *to the public* regarding Mr. Cotton's property even now. The only situation that appears logical is that if he knew through you, via Mrs. Austin, that Mr. Geraci was taking steps and using his political influence to sabotage the CUP application either with the City of San Diego, or the engineering company.

I'm OK with speaking sometime later this week, but if you don't respond by 3pm with the case number and provide stronger evidence/arguments than presented in your reply last night, Mr. Cotton is going to the Court of Appeals to file for a Writ describing the conspiracy on Tuesday that will name you and Mr. Magagna as co-conspirators. I myself may be forced to seek to amend Mr. Cotton's complaint to add you and Mr. Magagna as co-defendants and add a cause of action for conspiracy. This is not personal. The actions taken by Mr. Geraci and his agents are absolutely deplorable. Mr. Cotton will be completely destitute if he loses this case, I really just can't sit by and let that happen.

Lastly, you should note that Mr. Cotton is very intelligent and he gets legal concepts. He is currently digging deeply into understanding discovery methods and is already thinking of ways to prove that Mr. Magagna makes significant income from allegedly illegal sales to unlicensed dispensaries.

Mr. Cotton is aware of our conversation and, as noted, intends to file with the Court of Appeals on Tuesday naming you and Mr. Magagna among others. Ideally, I would like to be able to argue on your behalf with Mr. Cotton, but ultimately, he does whatever he wants. If you can give me any arguments or information that I can forward to persuade Mr. Cotton I will happily do so.

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Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> To: Jake Austin <jpa@jacobaustinesq.com>

Mon, May 28, 2018 at 12:10 PM

Jake-

I sent an initial response to your email to acknowledge receipt and set up a call early this week. It was and remains my intention to explain my perspective much more thoroughly on this call. If I am added to a lawsuit prior to this call, my ability to explain the situation from my perspective will be very seriously hindered. It does appear that I am extremely likely to be added to this lawsuit based on a number of very speculative conclusions.

I believe you did call me back and left a message after I called you actually. I don't think we ever connected, however.

There is a short list of cannabis attorneys in San Diego and the fact that I've worked cases both with and against Gina Austin doesn't mean we are in cahoots or have a close relationship.

I was there to observe the Geraci v Cotton case. There is nothing unlawful or conspiratorial about that. As an attorney in the cannabis industry also just getting into civil law, the Geraci v cotton case is interesting both for its influence on the San Diego cannabis industry and for its experiential/observational value. Additionally, since my practice is trending civil, it is of further value to observe how a judge handles their cases, particularly when it pertains to cannabis. My sitting near, not next to, Cotton was truly a coincidence, which I only realized when the case was called. Also, if I recall correctly, it wasn't as empty as you seem to remember and only had 2 or maybe 3 rows of chairs in the entire Courtroom. I always sit in the back row if I can and I chose left instead of right that day. Looks like that decision is going to end up having me embroiled in a lawsuit. Just lovely.

As to the CUP being likely to be approved, that is a very tenuous claim. The most recent recommendation from the City in late 2017 is to deny the project and it is tied up in litigation, both matters of public record. I don't see how anyone could claim it's on the cusp of approval if the soil is only being drilled now. It is not at all unreasonable for somebody to see a project the City recommended be disapproved that is tied up in litigation as an opportunity to submit a competing application, which is entirely lawful.

As I gain further understanding of the situation around this case and the CUP application, it does appear your client may have been wronged in some way shape or form. That is unfortunate. That does not, however, make anyone and everyone with interests not directly aligned with Mr. Cotton a conspirator against him. Neither myself, nor any of my clients that I am aware of, have ever had any contact with Mr. Geraci.

Many of my past and present clients have multiple CUP applications in for both MPF and Marijuana Outlet CUPs, however very few have actually hired me to handle the permitting process due to lack of experience. If one of those is competing with your client, it does not make everyone anyones ever worked with in the past a conspirator. Particularly when conspiracy requires an unlawful act.

If you won't afford me the courtesy of a phone call early this week, not on a holiday, before telling your client I should be added, so be it. I don't generally like to make enemies out of neutral parties but you guys are free to choose your path and seem thoroughly intent on adding me to this lawsuit.

I do not want a volley of emails back and forth ruining my holiday. Let's look to talk tomorrow.

-Matt



Jake Austin < jacobaustinesq@gmail.com>

Federal Blvd. CUP Application

Jake Austin < ipa@jacobaustinesq.com> To: Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> Mon, May 28, 2018 at 1:14 PM

Matt,

I understand your position. We need not argue the points via email. I am available tomorrow, let me know what time works for you tomorrow between 1-3 PM. However, please note that based on your representations here, particularly (i) the timing of your denial of having a close relationship with Mrs. Austin; (ii) the fact that you state you are following the Geraci v. Cotton case, but ostensibly are not aware that documents filed in that action by Geraci's experts do state the CUP is on the cusp of being approved, is contradictory; and (iii) again, it is not reasonable to believe, if I understand your indirect wording, you are also the attorney on the CUP representing Mr. Magagna, that you sat next to Mr. Cotton coincidentally. Thus, I find the situation suspect and will probably need to seek to amend Mr. Cotton's cross-complaint to add you and Mr. Magagna based on the facts alleged below.

Please note that I have discussed your communications with Mr. Cotton and he intends to name you and Mr. Magagna in his petition which he intends to file tomorrow with the Court of Appeals. I have nothing to do with that. My representation is limited to helping him through discovery up to trial.

The whole situation here is unfortunate, but the only true victim is Mr. Cotton.

- Jake

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Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> To: Jake Austin <jpa@jacobaustinesq.com>

Mon, May 28, 2018 at 1:25 PM

Just because I am following the case doesn't mean I've read every pleading. Furthermore, I don't care what an expert may or may not have said the fact remains that it is part of public record that the City has recommended a denial of the application and the application is tied up in litigation. If you'd like to point out or even send the statement by Geraci's expert that might prove helpful.

You are adding me into numerous lawsuits based not on facts but on very speculative and outright inaccurate conclusions. You are baselessly suing me and that is victimization. While I feel for Mr. Cotton's position if indeed he has been harmed by those he is litigating against, by adding me to these lawsuits you are now making me pick sides as opposed to being an observer.

I really appreciate the timing of all this. Have a great one.

-Matt

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Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> To: Jake Austin <jpa@jacobaustinesq.com>

Mon, May 28, 2018 at 1:29 PM

Also, why don't you wait for the engineering company's actual answer before concluding that they're against you?

--М:

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Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> To: Jake Austin <jpa@jacobaustinesq.com>

Mon, May 28, 2018 at 5:10 PM

Also, let's just pretend your baseless speculation is entirely accurate, which it is not, what exactly is your theory that arises to satisfy the prong requiring unlawful conduct to satisfy a conspiracy claim?

Please be sure you are confident you have more than just a suspicion and a frustrated client before you make accusations and allegations.

Happy Memorial Day!

-Matt

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Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> To: Jake Austin <jpa@jacobaustinesq.com>

Mon, May 28, 2018 at 7:36 PM

Plan for a phone call tomorrow at 1?

-Matt



Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> To: Jake Austin <jpa@jacobaustinesq.com>

Mon, May 28, 2018 at 8:27 PM

Is this the declaration you're referring to? If so, please point to me the part you are referencing that supports your theory. If not, please let me know which filing you are referring to and if you have it, please send.

-Matt

--N /

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Jake Austin djacobaustinesq.com>
To: Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal>

Mon, May 28, 2018 at 9:35 PM

Matt,

Yes, 1:00 PM works tomorrow.

However, please note the situation has changed substantially. I had a meeting today with Mr. Cotton and Ms. Corina Young - she stated that at a meeting with you and Mr. Bartell she brought up Mr. Cotton's CUP application and asked Mr. Bartell about it. To which, Mr. Bartell replied that Mr. Cotton's CUP application would be getting denied "because everyone hates Darryl." This apparently happened approximately 6 months or so ago.

I note that Mr. Cotton has become incredibly livid and is, as I write this, preparing his petition specifically describing that interaction with you, Mr. Bartell and Ms. Young.

I really don't see how this is not a conspiracy. Mr. Geraci and Mrs. Austin brought forth a meritless lawsuit which has created a situation where they need to appear to be attempting to get the CUP application on Mr. Cotton's property approved. However, given that the case has evolved and it is apparent that at some point the truth will come out, they are now financially motivated to sink that application. Mr. Bartell who was originally hired by Mr. Geraci to get the CUP application approved, but, per Ms. Young, he is now explicitly using his political influence to get it denied and you know it.

You work with Mrs. Austin, knew Mr. Bartell was seeking to sink the CUP application, represent Mr. Magagna, the individual who stands to gain from an unjust denial of Mr. Cotton's application, and, coincidentally you say, sat down next to Mr. Cotton and his litigation investor. If you were me, what would you believe?

-Jake

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Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> To: Jake Austin <jpa@jacobaustinesq.com>

Mon, May 28, 2018 at 10:12 PM

What would you think regarding what? I've worked with literally every cannabis attorney in town so I don't see your point regarding Gina Austin.

I don't think it's a secret that Jim Bartell works with the party opposing Cotton in the lawsuit so again you are accusing me of having public knowledge.

And let's give you the benefit of the doubt and suppose that I did have sinister intent on sitting next to Cotton, which I absolutely did not, then what? Is it your allegation that sitting next to somebody in court is unlawful?

Did you see the declaration I sent you? Is that the document to which you're referring to stake the claim that the permit application will be approved imminently?

Have you pulled the competing application from public records? Did you see my name anywhere in the file? Have you even pulled your own application, which isn't Mr Cottons but rather Rebecca Berry's and actually reviewed the file? I don't think you have done any of these things and it's irresponsible of you to make the assumptions and allegations you're doing without having done so.

You have this wrong. I hope you are able to look at the situation as even handedly as possible when we speak tomorrow.

-Matt



Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> To: Jake Austin <jpa@jacobaustinesq.com>

Tue, May 29, 2018 at 1:01 PM

I just called you and left a message. Please call me back

858-859-2420.

Thanks Matt

--

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Matthew Shapiro <matthew@shapiro.legal> To: Jake Austin <jpa@jacobaustinesq.com>

Tue, May 29, 2018 at 2:32 PM

Jake-

As per our phone call we just had, please relay the information I've shared with you with your client. I will relay to Mr. Magagna our discussion and I will discuss with him the prospect of meeting with yourself and Mr. Cotton and/or the withdrawal of his CUP application as per your request.

Please let me know when we can meet. I have office space near yours in Mission Valley.

Regards-Matt

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