

## **Councilman Defends Mayor Against Sun Article**

Councilman William Cole, D-District 11, calls Baltimore Sun article 'misleading.'

by Adam Bednar, *NorthBaltimore.Patch.com*, March 17, 2011

Councilman William Cole is attacking a Baltimore Sun article questioning whether Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake violated the city's ethics code by voting on deals with Johns Hopkins, her husband's employer.

In an e-mail sent from his private account, Cole, D-District 11, called the article "misleading" and said it was apparently driven by "flawed political opposition research."

The Sun reported on Wednesday that Rawlings-Blake had approved 12 contracts or grants worth \$900,000 with Johns Hopkins since her husband Kent Blake began working with one of its divisions in December.

The article also noted that Rawlings-Blake had not voted on anything directly involving Johns Hopkins Community Physicians, the division that employs Kent Blake.

Cole said in an interview that the article implied Rawlings-Blake had done something unethical, but never produced any evidence that her actions were inappropriate.

"That's a story that probably needed a bit more research," Cole said.

Although the Sun did print an editorial arguing the mayor had not violated the city ethics code, Cole said that it was too little too late. He said that casual readers will see the headline and believe the mayor has done something wrong.

"The fact is most people don't read the editorials," he said.

Cole has been a vocal supporter of Rawlings-Blake.

Ian Brennan, a spokesman for the mayor, said he was unaware Cole had sent an e-mail prior to a reporter calling for comment. "I hadn't seen it," Brennan said.

Renee Mutchnik, a spokeswoman for the newspaper, in an e-mail said the Sun is standing by its article.

"We stand by the story. Our readers expect The Sun to hold public officials accountable, and we consider that responsibility one of our most important missions," Mutchnik wrote.

City Solicitor George Nilson issued a letter regarding Rawlings-Blake's need to abstain from voting on issues impacting Johns Hopkins.

In the letter Nilson writes "that abstention is only required where [Johns Hopkins Community Physicians], the specific place where her husband works, is party to a matter on which the mayor is prepared to act."