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Salvaging a reputation

Who ordered Pickering probe?

By ROSALYN SOLOMON, SUN MEDIA

DURHAM -- Fraud charges against former Pickering Councillor Maurice Brenner were dismissed but the matter is far from over.

Pickering city council has ordered its own investigation, but this time staff will be looking into who approved the original investigation, how private documents got into the hands of a reporter and why the charges were brought up last year when the allegations were centred on 1999 to 2001.

"I'm looking forward to hearing the truth, and even though I know the answers, it's up to the people in the community to learn the same truth," Brenner said. "I have all the confidence the City of Pickering will do the right thing and reveal the proper truth."

TWO FRAUD COUNTS

Brenner was charged last year with two counts of fraud under \$5,000, uttering a forged document and breach of trust by a public officer. He was accused of submitting false expenses for reimbursements for outside clerical services. The charges were dismissed in June.

After attending the trial and reading transcripts and old council minutes, Councillor Jennifer O'Connell asked for a report. She said it was revealed in the trial the charges were already investigated three times.

WHAT WAS THE PROBLEM?

"If it wasn't the CAO and if the treasurer was satisfied and the investigation had been done three times, what seemed to be the problem in 2006, during an election year?" O'Connell asked.

"My biggest fear is that this was done as a political motivation ... I just really hope it was not something done maliciously using the taxpayers' money," she said.

Brenner said he wasn't sure if he would run in the 2010 elections, but said it's still an option worth considering.

Chief administrative officer Tom Quinn will be reviewing the court documents and speaking to city staff.

The report will be completed for council's first meeting on Sept. 10.