



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Winery files \$30,000,000 Federal Lawsuit against Yorktown, Bianco, Campisi, Oros & other town officials...**

Yorktown, NY June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008 – The Winery at St. George and owner Thomas DeChiaro filed a \$30,000,000 Federal Civil Rights Action in the United States District Court, in the Southern District of New York against the Town of Yorktown. In addition to the Town, the following individuals were also named as defendants:

1. NICHOLAS BIANCO – Town Board Member
2. LOUIS CAMPISI - Town Board Member
3. GEORGE OROS – Westchester County Legislator
4. LINDA COOPER – Former Town Supervisor
5. WILLIAM GREGORY – Town Building Inspector
6. BRUCE BARBER – Environmental Code Officer
7. JOHN TEGEDER – Director of Planning

Within his complaint, Mr. DeChiaro asserts that local Yorktown officials violated his federally protected rights to file various land use applications by unreasonably preventing him from operating a farming operation and winery in Westchester County in retaliation against Mr. DeChiaro for having sought protection from the State of New York.

Mr. DeChiaro further asserts that, upon information and belief, one or more Yorktown officials sought to punish him for having rebuffed requests to pay what Mr. DeChiaro perceived to be "political graft monies" which had apparently been paid to one or more Yorktown officials by the previous owner of Mr. DeChiaro's property.

The complaint, which totals over eighty pages, and is accompanied by an Affidavit from the former owner of Mr. DeChiaro's property, as well as over a dozen exhibits, details efforts by Town Board Member Nicholas Bianco and former Town Supervisor, Linda Cooper, to defeat virtually every application which Mr. DeChiaro has filed with County and State authorities in furtherance of his efforts to pursue his vineyard and winery operation.

Within his Federal complaint, Mr. DeChiaro further alleges that, in an effort to conceal their "unlawful" actions, the defendants, including former Supervisor Linda Cooper, "deliberately destroyed" town records to eliminate evidence of their conduct, including intentionally deleting all computer files within a directory which was entitled "Old Stone Church" (Mr. DeChiaro's property) which had been maintained on a hard drive on the Town's computer system.

Mr. DeChiaro's attorney, Andrew J. Campanelli has stated that, "As detailed within the federal complaint, we are dealing with an abuse of power of the most insidious type, by Yorktown officials."

"As has been confirmed by the previous owner of the Old Stone Church, when a property owner seeks to employ their property for a commercial use in Yorktown, they can expect to receive requests for cash payments from one or more Yorktown officials. As Mr. DeChiaro has learned, if the property owner rebuffs those requests, he can expect Yorktown officials to cause the denial of any and all land use applications filed with the Town, and to wield their political influence to cause applications pending before the County and State to be denied as well.

This conduct is beyond outrageous, constitutes a blatant violation of Mr. DeChiaro's rights, and should never be tolerated by any owner of property in Yorktown or anywhere else. Contrary to the apparent beliefs of one or more Yorktown officials, property owners are vested with Constitutional rights to use their property as they see fit, and those rights fall squarely within the protections of the United States Constitution and the 1st and 14th Amendments."

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