



***BROWARD COUNTY PBA  
DAILY CLIPS***

***October 25, 2016***

**MEDIA OUTLET:** Sun Sentinel

**HEADLINE:** Hallandale commissioners, candidate say trackers placed on their cars

**BYLINE:** Susannah Bryan

**LINK:** <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/hallandale/fl-london-lazarow-taub-investigation-20161024-story.html>

**STORY:** State investigators are looking into a complaint that illegal tracking devices were placed on the cars of two commissioners and a commission candidate — the latest in a series of allegations in one of Broward County's nastiest elections.

Commissioners Keith London and Michele Lazarow and commission candidate Anabelle Taub have filed a complaint with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, which has not decided whether to open a criminal case.

"We have received a complaint and are reviewing it to see if we will investigate," said FDLE spokesman Phil Kiracofe.

The two women and London, who is helping them campaign, accuse their political rivals of spying on them. The complaint follows a series of clashes among commissioners that include accusations of possible open-government violations and behind-the-scenes deals with developers.

In the latest matter, London said he suspected for weeks that he was being followed. On Friday, he discovered a GPS tracker under the rear bumper of his car, he said. He then called Lazarow and Taub and found similar devices under their cars.

London said he filed a complaint with the FDLE because he didn't think Hallandale Beach Police could handle the case. He said he turned over all three tracking devices to investigators, hoping they can trace them to their source or sources.

During a news conference Monday, London, Lazarow and Taub all said they've been followed in recent weeks, and London has a recording he took last week of what he says is a private investigator following him.

The recording, released to reporters, is shot from London's car. The recording shows the man walking to London's window, and London asks why he is following him. The man denies it and walks away.

The episode follows a recent city meeting where London publicly accused Mayor Joy Cooper of having him followed, an allegation she denies.

"These people have lost their minds," Cooper said Monday. "I would never do anything illegal."

Under state law, anyone caught installing a tracking device on someone's vehicle without a court order can face second-degree misdemeanor charges. But Brian Silber, Lazarow's attorney, said it is not illegal to follow someone unless it becomes harassment or intimidation.

Separately, the Broward State Attorney's Office is investigating a complaint filed by Cooper accusing London and Lazarow of breaking the state's open-government law by discussing public business in private.

State prosecutors also are investigating Commissioner Bill Julian, who stands accused of accepting favors from a developer. Julian was caught on a recording saying the developer's attorney promised to get him 300 campaign workers and a van for the Hallandale Food Pantry, one of his pet charities.

Julian could not be reached for comment Monday despite three calls to his cellphone.

Taub is challenging Julian in the Nov. 8 election. Lazarow is facing two opponents: former commissioner Alex Lewy and retired secretary Ann Henigson.

Lewy said he was not behind any alleged spying campaign and both he and Cooper questioned whether the trackers were a political stunt.

London said he would not file a false crime complaint as a political stunt.

Lazarow's attorney, Brian Silber, also scoffed at the claim.

"A crime has been reported," Silber said. "Evidence has been disclosed and they are reviewing this matter to determine if a violation of criminal law has occurred and who committed the crime."

**MEDIA OUTLET:** Sun Sentinel

**HEADLINE:** Broward school board may expand meeting times to allow for more public input

**BYLINE:** Caitlin R. McGlade

**LINK:** <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/education/fl-broward-late-public-comment-a-fluke-20161025-story.html>

**STORY:** In a rare move, the Broward County School Board last Tuesday listened to public comments in the early evening, when it was most convenient for day workers, including teachers.

But that may have been a one-time offer.

About 150 teachers and supporters flocked to the 5 p.m. open comment session, although the board allowed only 10 people to speak during that window and required them to sign up in advance.

Now Board Chair Rosalind Osgood said the move was a test run —one she isn't sure is worth trying again even though the board's legal counsel called it a good move.

The larger discussion is whether to start meetings later, she said, adding the board would need to consider impacts on district staff who must attend the meetings that start around 10 a.m. And she questioned what the board and staff would do when meetings end before 5 p.m., but they have to wait hours for the comment period to start.

Board member Robin Bartleman said she'd push to make the later comment period permanent at least at one meeting per month. Hearing teacher concerns during the meetings was enlightening, she said.

"I thought I knew a lot of their issues but it wasn't until they came out to to speak that I even learned new things," Bartleman said, adding, "I think people want to have their voices heard I think we as representatives need to hear them."

The public can comment during a meetings in two ways. Anyone can address subjects that the board is discussing during the meeting as long as they stay on topic. They can speak to unrelated matters during an open session at noon.

The 5 p.m. window last Tuesday allowed for a second open-comment period. But the board heard the bulk of teacher grievances while they reviewed a new software purchase. About a dozen teachers railed against the software and related subjects, which they would have been allowed to do at any meeting.

Broward Teachers Union president Anna Fusco said the early slots for public input has kept teachers from publicly lodging their complaints.

"You have to give up one of your days, and you have to worry about your principal (criticizing) you that you took a day off and that you took a day to speak against your own district," Fusco said.

The Broward school district is the only one in South Florida that starts regular board meetings in the morning. That schedule makes it difficult for much of the working public to weigh in on board decisions as they unfold.

Superintendent Robert Runcie said the board offers various opportunities at different times for public input throughout the year, including hosting boundary hearings in the evenings.

Barbara Myrick, the school board's general counsel, noted during last week's meeting that a number of people had called for a 5 p.m. speaking time.

But she also said the board is only obligated to allow the public to speak about subjects the board had agreed to discuss.

Osgood said she alone could not make the 5 p.m. comment period permanent. She said board members and the public together need to flesh out details before making changes.

"It is not my intention to minimize anyone's voice," she said. "As a leader, it's not a decision you can't just make in a vacuum."

**MEDIA OUTLET:** Broward Beat

**HEADLINE:** Broward Politics: County Commission Candidate's Misleading Ad

**BYLINE:** Buddy Nevins

**LINK:** <http://www.browardbeat.com/broward-politics-county-commission-candidates-misleading-ad/>

**STORY:** Broward County Commission candidate Chuck Lanza is a Republican.

U. S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz is Democrat and the former chair of the Democratic National Committee.

So it was strange to see Wasserman Schultz praising Lanza in the candidate's recent advertising that arrived in mail boxes over the weekend.

The ad features a speech she made on the floor of the House commending Lanza on his retirement as Broward's emergency management director.

The speech took place more than two years ago, long before Lanza was running for the commission.

The piece doesn't say the congresswoman is endorsing Lanza. However, it is clearly designed to create that impression.

Let's be clear: Wasserman Schultz has not endorsed Broward County Commission candidate Lanza. She isn't even supporting him.

She is in Broward County Commission candidate Steve Geller's corner. Geller, the Democratic candidate, is a long-time Democratic office holder and activist.

The congresswoman could not be reached for comment. She is said by a source to be "irate" about the misleading ad.

Browardbeat.com believes the source for one key reason: The flyer supplied to us was the one mailed to Wasserman Schultz's Weston home.

Lanza and Geller are vying for the open County Commission District 5 in Southwest Broward.

**MEDIA OUTLET:** FOX Miami (Channel 7)

**HEADLINE:** Hallandale Beach commission candidates claim GPS devices placed on vehicles

**BYLINE:** Brandon Beyer

**LINK:** <http://wsvn.com/news/local/hallandale-beach-commission-candidates-claim-gps-devices-placed-on-vehicles/>

**STORY:** HALLANDALE BEACH, FLA. (WSVN) - Some Hallandale Beach lawmakers believe illegal tracking devices were placed on their vehicles to monitor their activity, just weeks before the election.

There are two weeks and one day left until election day, and the stakes for South Florida political candidates are higher than ever, which is why illegal tracking devices found on candidates' cars are causing a major concern.

Two commissioners, including one seeking re-election, and one commission candidate, claim they are being followed, because tracking devices have been found on their vehicles.

"I don't believe in coincidences," said attorney Brian Sibling. "To tell me it isn't the political opponent of these people, you're going to have to tell me that it's a coincidence that Commissioner Lazarow, Commissioner London, and Anabelle Taub all got GPS trackers on their cars 'by accident.' What a coincidence that is."

At around 10 a.m., Monday, commissioners Michele Lazarow and Keith London, and commission candidate Anabelle Taub, met with reporters at Hallandale Beach City Hall to discuss their concerns.

They claimed illegal tracking devices were found on their personal vehicles and presented photographs as evidence.

Commissioner London also said he believes he might have been followed. He released a video he recorded of a man approaching him in a parking lot. "Seems like you're following me," London says in the video, "seems like you're following me."

There has been tension on the Hallandale Beach City Commission since the release of an accidental voice mail reportedly left by Vice Mayor Bill Julian. In the voice mail, Julian appears to admit to taking favors for votes.

"What I did was I voted against an extra \$25,000. We are already gonna get \$25,000. I didn't want to (inaudible) for more because what they don't know is they're buying the food bank a new van, but I couldn't tell everybody," Julian reportedly said in the voicemail.

The vice mayor said he can't speak about the issue, but in meetings, there have been plenty of comments.

"Stick a sock in it," he told another commissioner in one meeting.

On Monday, the commissioners and their attorney accused opponents of trying to use scare tactics.

“This is not how elections go down in the United States of America. Political opponents are not allowed to use intimidation and scare tactics to keep people out of office,” Sibling said.

Hallandale Beach Mayor Joy Cooper sent an email to 7News that read, “I am appalled that these three individuals have brought this form of trashy politics to our city. As a wife, mother, grandmother, and mayor, I am personally offended to be accused of such absurd criminal behavior and am publicly demanding an apology from all three of them.”

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement said they are aware of the situation and are reviewing the case.



**MEDIA OUTLET:** FOX Miami (Channel 7)

**HEADLINE:** Broward voters to consider two candidates for BSO sheriff

**BYLINE:** Brandon Beyer

**LINK:** <http://wsvn.com/news/local/broward-voters-to-consider-two-candidates-for-bso-sheriff/>

**STORY:** FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA. (WSVN) - Election day is quickly approaching, and Broward voters now have the opportunity to choose who the county's next top cop will be.

Democratic incumbent Broward Sheriff Scott Israel is facing political newcomer, Republican Santiago Vasquez Jr.

Israel said his track record speaks for itself. "We reduced violent crime over 20 percent. Our burglary rate is down over 40 percent. Every time I've had an opportunity to stand out against gun violence, I have."

Vasquez, however, believes that it is time for change. "The people of Broward County deserve better. They deserve a sheriff that is not a politician," he said.

Vasquez believes he brings something new to the table since he began his career in the military and spent 22 years in law enforcement. "I'm not a politician, I'm a police officer," Vasquez said. "Let's work with the community together."

Israel said that he has the experience Vasquez lacks. "My opponent is in virgin territory. He would have no understanding of what I do for a living," he said. "I spent 25 years on the street. I didn't just magically appear as sheriff. I was a police officer, I was an undercover narcotics detective, I was a community policing officer, I was a SWAT commander. His experience pales in comparison to mine."

In regards with working with the community, Israel said his efforts have made an impact. "We couldn't be doing more from a community policing perspective," Israel said. "We go to churches and temples and religious institutions. We go to schools."

Israel credits community policing with purging Flakka, a dangerous drug, from the streets.

One other issue the pair disagree on is implementing body cameras on police outfits.

Vasquez said he supports the use of body cameras, but only if the state mandates and pays for them. "Is it realistic, right now, with the economy and with the budget of the Sheriff's Office? No. It's not," Vasquez said.

Israel said that saving money for this particular tool is non-negotiable. "I wouldn't want to be the one to stand up there and say, 'Well, I voted against body cameras, I wanted to save a few dollars,'" Israel said. "That's not what Broward County wants."

Israel said it will be up to the county and each city to foot the bill.

When it comes to the budget, Israel hasn't always agreed with Broward County commissioners, which is something Vasquez is zeroing in on. "He wants more money every time for everything that he does,"

Vasquez said. "How about releasing some of his friends that he has hired as administrators that are not qualified for administration?"

"It seems like the county's philosophy is, 'Let's save money. My philosophy is let's save lives,'" Israel said.

Vasquez is highly critical of Broward County's 911 system, which was plagued with problems after its 2014 rollout. Israel said those issues have all been resolved.

**MEDIA OUTLET:** ABC Miami (Channel 10)

**HEADLINE:** Plot thickens in Hallandale Beach political spying case

**BYLINE:** Bob Norman

**LINK:** <http://www.local10.com/news/bob-norman/plot-thickens-in-hallandale-beach-political-spying-case>

**STORY:** HALLANDALE BEACH, Fla. - Hallandale Beach candidate Annabelle Taub said Monday she didn't know what she was in for when threw her hat in the ring for a spot on the dais.

"I knew I would be sacrificing some of my privacy," she said. "What I didn't know was that I would have a group of creepy hired guns stalking and illegally tracking me."

Taub, along with commissioners Michelle Lazarow and Keith London, allege they discovered what appear to be illegally installed GPS tracking devices on their cars -- small black boxes that they've turned over to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, which is now conducting a criminal investigation. They also claim private investigators have been following them, with London catching one on cellphone video.

At a news conference Monday, they said a clue as to who's paying for the alleged spying comes in a television attack ad that contains apparent surveillance video of Lazarow and London. The ad was placed by a political committee called Protecting Coastal Communities, which has been funded with about \$100,000 provided by companies tied to the city's Diplomat Golf & Tennis Course -- the same company involved in a state corruption investigation into Taub's opponent, Bill Julian.

Julian was caught on audiotape admitting that he agreed to accept a secret side deal -- involving a new van for his favorite charity and 300 campaign workers on the street to help him in his re-election -- from the developers before he voted earlier this year to approve the Diplomat's \$450 million high-rise project.

London, Lazarow and Taub allege that the surveillance video in the ad ties the spying campaign to the developer-funded political committee that sponsored it.

Hallandale Beach commissioners Keith London and Michelle Lazarow and candidate Annabelle Taub holding tracking devices that they claim were planted on their cars.

"A shady PAC funded by prominent lobbyists and the same developers who are accused of bribing Bill Julian is running a TV commercial using footage that was obtained illegally by private investigators that placed tracking devices on all of our cars," Lazarow said.

When asked on the telephone about both the political money and the political surveillance, Diplomat principal Louis Birdman said he had no idea about it before hanging up the phone.

No evidence has surfaced as to the source of the tracking devices, and the FDLE is not commenting on the investigation.

"What kind of shady business is going on in our city that these people will break the law and violate our constitutional rights in order to maintain political power?" Lazarow said.

**MEDIA OUTLET:** Miami New Times

**HEADLINE:** BSO Crime Lab's New Software May Not Hold Up in Court

**BYLINE:** Antonia Noori Farzan

**LINK:** <http://www.browardpalmbeach.com/news/bso-crime-lab-s-new-software-may-not-hold-up-in-court-8172662>

**STORY:** Ever since a whistleblower pointed out that there might be some serious flaws in the DNA analyses performed by the Broward Sheriff's Office, the crime lab has been in a tailspin. Its leaders are fighting to maintain accreditation, and the Broward state attorney's office has been forced to reopen as many as 2,000 closed cases.

One change so far? They are starting to use a relatively new type of forensic software called STRmix that deciphers DNA evidence previously considered too complex to accurately interpret.

But as BuzzFeed News reported earlier this year, the main problem with STRmix and other DNA-matching software programs is that hardly anyone knows how they work. That's by design: The companies claim their methods are trade secrets and have been fighting to keep source codes under wraps. As a result, defense attorneys aren't able to have experts independently verify the results.

It's not hard to imagine how this could go wrong. If the software identifies the wrong culprit, who's going to know? And what if there's a glitch or a technical malfunction?

Also, STRmix is a relatively new technology, and there's an ongoing debate over whether it should be admissible in court. So far, there have been two major rulings: one in favor, one against.

The first took place last December, when a Michigan judge decided to allow a DNA sample that had been taken from a lost shoe and analyzed by STRmix into evidence in an armed robbery case. That DNA analysis ended up being a crucial factor leading to El-Amin Muhammad's conviction, which resulted in a 25- to 38-year prison sentence.

Then, in August of this year, a judge in upstate New York ruled against the use of the software in a controversial case involving the murder of a 12-year-old boy. Oral Nicholas Hillary, a former soccer coach and Jamaican immigrant, is being accused of strangling Garrett Phillips, the son of a woman he dated. Police have testified that there's little to no physical evidence against him. And the whole thing has turned into such a fiasco (featuring a whole lot of open racism) that the New York Times did a 5,000-word feature story about it. Meanwhile, prosecutors have been so desperate to link Hillary to the crime that they attempted to use STRmix to analyze tiny scrapings from Garrett's fingernails, which they then claimed matched his DNA. The judge didn't buy it.

BSO has not responded to questions about the use of the STRmix, including how much it cost. The software is still somewhat outside the mainstream: According to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, only nine crime labs in the entire country are currently using it. An additional five use TrueAllele, a competing program.

Whether it will end up being challenged in Florida courts, as it was in New York and Michigan, is an open question.