

Letter To The Editor: Letter Writer Questions MRCTI Membership and Trips

by Mike Drake
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Letter to the Editor:

In April 2023, in the city's bill listing, there was an expense for a \$3,000 membership fee for Mayor Goins to join an organization, the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI) one that previous mayors paid nothing to join. When asked about this fee by Alderwoman Carolyn MacAfee, he defended that expense, saying that there

would be a great deal of useful information to bring back by attending these out of town, Alton taxpayer funded meetings. Carolyn asked him to report back on what benefits to Alton these meetings provide. The first meeting he attended was in Minnesota, less than a month after paying the \$3,000...that travel cost to the city was an additional \$1,000. As expected, he did not report on any information gleaned from that meeting.

In the past 30 days, there have been more meetings, more expenses submitted. Two weeks ago, there were Southwest flight tickets to Milwaukee. This week nearly \$1,500 more travel expenses were submitted. They were for meals ranging from \$36 to \$50, Uber rides \$121, Early flight boarding passes \$100, and another \$1,027 in hotel expenses.

Again, Alderwoman MacAfee questioned these expenses. His answer was that he went to Washington, D.C. ,to attend another MRCTI meeting. She asked if these bills were for just one person, to which he refused to answer, but avoided the question by quickly saying he met with Congresswoman Budzinski and talked about funding some local projects, but he could not provide more details. Kudos to Alderwoman MacAfee for noticing these expenses and questioning Mayor Goins.

My point is, previous mayors were active in this organization, but did not pay a \$3,000 membership fee. This \$3,000 membership fee has now cost the city nearly \$6,000 that I am aware of. This is simply an excuse to take expensive, taxpayer funded, out of town, trips, stay in expensive hotels, have expensive meals, purchase early boarding passes for flights, and pay to ride an UBER around in Washington D.C.

There are many in Alton who cannot afford groceries, and we must put up with this?

I pray the remaining days in this administration are few. As an Alton taxpayer footing those bills, I am disgusted with these pleasure trips. His evasive answer regarding this most recent trip to D.C. is just more evidence of the lack of transparency of this administration.

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Alton

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