

Food Bank

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solved financial matter discussed at a meeting Braggs attended recently, along with Bell and Assistant Clark County Manager Daryl Martin, she said. "They refused to release \$165,000 to us; dollars that was already approved."

Bell countered by saying, "There was no deal."

Bell explained that once American Second Harvest notified the county that it had pulled the Community Food Bank's franchise from its network, the county had no choice but to take the action.

"Without being in network, where was the Community Food Bank going to get their food?" Bell asked.

He went on to say, "I tried to get American Second Harvest to change its mind." He continued, "Both were at an impasse. They refused to talk to each other. We had no choice. Our goal is getting the food out to poor people. The problem was between the Community Food Bank and American Second Harvest."

In response, Braggs said, "That's fine."

Bragg noted that American Second Harvest isn't the only major food distributor, "[Clark] County didn't give

it a chance."

Braggs described American Second Harvest's action as a "hostile takeover."

Braggs responded, "I don't know," to the question of whether American Second Harvest saw a lucrative Las Vegas operation and wanted to take it over.

She added, "American Second Harvest accused us of selling food to the general public. We never did."

According to Braggs, a battle between the Community Food Bank and American Second Harvest has been going on for years.

"I didn't go along with them," Braggs said.

She agreed she was outspoken and that might have contributed to losing the franchise.

Spokesperson for American Second Harvest, Phil Zeppeda, said, "The Community Food Bank was a former member. They were removed, and their contract was terminated on August 21, 2007." He stated the reason: "For egregious violations."

According to Zeppeda, "The Community Food Bank sold donated food."

He also said, "Our staff witnessed the sale. We also hired a private investigator."

According to Zeppeda,



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Maggie Towns separates an array of goods at the food bank and places them in a basket.

Braggs's food bank "never bought food from American Second Harvest. It was all donations." He said, "It was a violation of their contract."

But Braggs said, "We pay a \$10,000 franchise fee yearly."

Responding to Zeppeda, Braggs said, "Food had nothing to do with it. It was just a ploy to get rid of us. They have been trying to get rid of us for years."

She went on to say about the alleged sale of goods, "It was donated personal care products, and it wasn't sold. We are okay with the termi-

nation. It hurt, but it was based on lies."

Regarding Three Square, Zeppeda said, "They are not in our network."

He added, "We are interested, but it's not a deal yet."

Right now, Zeppeda said, the distribution is directly to the charities. He named Catholic Charities, Nevada Homeless and Interfaith Council as local recipient organizations.

The Community Food Bank of Clark County has a large warehouse.

"We service about 70,000 people a month," said

Braggs.

It is located at 4190 N. Pecos Rd. The building has 50,000 square feet of warehouse space and 25,000 square feet of freezer space. "We'll be around for a while," said Braggs.

Unless there is a reversal or change to the decision, not only will the Community Food Bank cease to exist, but it will also lose its building. The property will revert back to the county. The \$165,000 Braggs says is due to her organization will be decided upon soon by the county commissioners.

With a franchise, the money as well as the building may be given to Three Square.

These are county commission decisions, according to Bell.

Three Square was formed in 2006 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating the hunger problem in the Las Vegas Valley as a result of a two-year study funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, according to news releases on its informational website, www.ThreeSquare.org. Many of the officers and directors named are affiliated with local hotel-casinos, mega resorts, construction firms, banks and other corporations.

"People are upset," said Braggs. There are 11 part-time employees working at the Community Food Bank. "Some are young," said Braggs. "All 11 employees will lose their jobs."

According to Bell, he would like to see the proposed new franchisee, Three Square, up and running within 30 to 60 days.

It will take at least that time to clear the shelves of the current food bank's supply of existing inventory, he said.

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