

Prepared Statement – Councilmember John Iacofano
(for the October 14 Town Council Meeting)

Mayor, Councilmembers, and citizens of Mount Pleasant —

At our Special Council Meeting last week, I witnessed Councilmember Mike Tinkey whispering to Councilmember Gary Santos and writing a large, handwritten note that read, “*Vote With The Mayor.*” Before I even revealed that note, I could see what was happening. I told Gary several times to **vote his conscience** and to make his decision independently.

When Councilmember Tinkey then held the note up for Gary to see, I asked for the floor, approached, and revealed it so that every member — and the public — could see what was influencing the discussion.

I didn’t shout. I didn’t insult anyone.

I acted to protect the process.

Under **Robert’s Rules of Order**, debate and persuasion must occur **openly**, before the public and on the record.

Private communications during deliberation are expressly out of order. They violate both **decorum** and every member’s right to exercise **independent judgment**.

It’s also worth noting that the **Mayor, as presiding officer, did not gavel me out of order**. Under Robert’s Rules, that means my action stood as procedurally valid in that moment.

The chair’s silence is acknowledgment that my conduct was within the rules.

After I exposed the note, Councilmember Tinkey said that I was talking to him. I clarified immediately that I was speaking to Gary — reminding him to vote his conscience. Neither the Mayor, nor Councilmember Tinkey, nor Gary questioned or challenged that clarification at the time.

Some have suggested that *my* action was a “breach of decorum.”

But transparency is not disorder.

Disorder is when votes are directed by whispered words and handwritten notes instead of by conscience.

South Carolina's Ethics Reform Act and our shared commitment to open government require us to deliberate in full view of the citizens who elected us.

A written instruction to “vote with” someone else undermines that duty.

Reminding a colleague to *vote his conscience* upholds it.

My intent was simple: to ensure the people's business was done in public, free from pressure or choreography.

That is what integrity looks like in practice — uncomfortable perhaps, but essential.

As we move forward, I hope we use this as the starting point for a stronger **Code of Conduct**, one that makes clear that no private influence — verbal, written, or implied — belongs inside this chamber.

Mount Pleasant deserves transparency, independence, and accountability from every elected official.

That's not a breach of decorum — that's the standard of public service.