

Good evening.

My name is **Joel Hamernick** and I am here as the **Executive Director of Sunshine Gospel Ministries and Sunshine Enterprises.**

While the ethics violation charges are made against Robin Rue Simmons, they include significant mistakes, misrepresentations, and false accusations against our organizations. These have been expanded by social media statements leading up to this meeting. Given the volume and ambiguity of the statements, I will not attempt to respond to every false or misleading claim. I thank the Board for allowing me an opportunity to correct some of these false and defamatory charges.

1. **City of Evanston/CDBG Funds**: The statements regarding embezzlement and fraud are patently false.
 - a. Currently, Sunshine Enterprises receives **no funds** from either the City of Evanston or the CDBG program in Evanston. Yet, Sunshine continues to operate our classes to support local entrepreneurs (Community Business Academy) and follow up coaching, mentoring, advocacy and networking (Business Accelerator Services).
 - b. Sunshine will commit to **not to seek any funding in the future**, so long as any Sunshine staff holds a leadership position with the City of Evanston.
 - c. 100% of the City of Evanston CDBG Funds was utilized by Sunshine Enterprises to support and deliver Evanston-based programming. In fact, significant additional funds were required from Sunshine to supplement CDBG funding.
 - d. The original grant was issued prior to Ms. Rue Simmons joining City Council, and actually resulted from City Council's solicitation of Sunshine.
2. **Non-Discrimination**: Suggestions and innuendo of discrimination are patently false. Sunshine Enterprises has always been a fully non-discriminatory program and organization. A copy of our non-discrimination policy is attached to this statement (Exhibit "A"). A full copy of the Procedures Manual can be made available to the Board.
3. **Legality of Sunshine Enterprises**: Sunshine Enterprises was incorporated by Sunshine's corporate counsel, DLA Piper, in 2016. (See Exhibit "B", Articles of Incorporation & Exhibit "C" By-Laws). Sunshine Enterprises obtained an IRS FEIN in 2016 (See Exhibit "D"). Finally, Sunshine Enterprise's 501(c) (3) application is on file with the IRS. Statements that Sunshine Enterprises is not registered and have never filed with the IRS are demonstrably false. Prior to incorporation, Sunshine Enterprises operated as a d/b/a of Sunshine Gospel Ministries, which is a not-for-profit incorporated in Illinois in 1984. Sunshine is audited annually by an independent 3rd party auditor.

4. **Salary & Program Costs:** The complaint is intentionally misrepresentative on the issues of compensation. Ms. Simmons is paid a salary to run the entire program; not just to teach a class. This is a full time position; with compensation that is actually below the \$75,000 Evanston AMI for a family of four.

5. **Performance & Reporting:** The claim of a single job generated by Sunshine's activities is intentionally false. The performance and general compliance documentation provided by Sunshine to the city are good faith representation of the work completed under the grant period and in keeping with both our application to, and contract with, the city for services rendered.
 - a. The long-term impact of our program and services, as with any business development work, will continue.

 - b. In April of this year we will begin our annual survey of the more than 450 businesses that have graduated from our CBA around the city, including 111 from Evanston cohorts. These surveys will allow us to continue to track the growth and or failure of business development in minority and under-represented communities in Evanston and the greater Chicagoland area.

 - c. While we are no longer under contract with Evanston, our work here continues. We look forward to appearing before the council in the near future to report on the continuing impact, lessons learned and best practices available for supporting the micro and small business community as a critical part of our society's economic fabric.

On a personal note, I must say that I have found Ms. Simmons to be a highly dedicated, hardworking employee and citizen who consistently demonstrates excellence, humility and integrity. Her efforts on behalf of our local businesses are extreme. She works many nights and weekends after putting in long days in preparation, coaching and networking. She is particularly assertive in her advocacy for the residents of her ward and her undeniable passion to see local businesses grow and pathways to wealth created. It has been an honor to work alongside Robin in these efforts.

Exhibits:

- A. Non Discrimination Policy
- B. Articles of Incorporation
- C. By-Laws
- D. FEIN Letter