

Mayor John Marks: "I made a mistake."

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TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- Tallahassee Mayor John Marks is speaking out after coming under fire for allegations of wrong doing.

"After reviewing all that took place I knew there was one simple fact. Let me make this clear. I made a mistake. I should have abstained from the city commission vote on September 15th to accept, remember this was a vote simply to accent the federal grant money," Mayor Marks said Wednesday.



Marks is referring to a \$1.6 million federal grant awarded last year to the City of Tallahassee in a partnership with Atlanta, Georgia based "Alliance for Digital Equality."

The grant was to be used to enhance broadband opportunities in low-income areas.

The dispute comes from a September 15, 2010 city commission meeting when Mayor Marks participated in a vote to accept the grant. The problem is that Marks at the time never disclosed he was a paid advisor for the "Alliance for Digital Equality." Marks says he's been a paid advisor since 2007 and remains now a non-paid advisor.

He says he did tell city attorney Jim English of the relationship on December 8, 2010 just prior to a follow up city commission meeting in which Marks says he abstained from the vote.

The discovery was made and posted earlier this week on TallahasseeReports.com. A website run by former mayoral candidate Steve Stewart.

"To say something is politically motivated which is backed up by documents given to me by people at city hall is probably more of an emotional response and I think today reflects more of what the reality is," Stewart said.

Marks says in hindsight it was a mistake.

"I wasn't trying to hide anything. I passed the gavel so I could make the motion to accept the funds. In hindsight I should have recused myself, I really should have recused myself realizing I was in an advisory capacity with the alliance," Marks said.

Stewart says this highlights an on-going issue within city hall.

"I think it acknowledges there's a problem and without these employees coming forward we would have never discovered this problem and that's troubling to me how many other problems are there that we haven't been able to get it," Stewart said.

Marks counters that, saying the City of Tallahassee has an open government.

"Anything that's public record that belongs to me, they can have, we are completely open and transparent government here, and that's proof we've had literally hundreds of public record requests," Marks said.

Mayor Marks says the city has not yet taken possession of the \$1.6 million grant.

He says he is now submitting a request to the ethics commission to review the actions and to provide council on the matter. Additionally, Marks says the city is in talk with the federal agency in charge of the grant to decide what, if anything, can be done to allow the city to keep the grant.