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Daniel Bice

Police chief's role in consultant funding raises questions

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Police Chief **Edward Flynn** helped steer nearly \$50,000 in private funds through back channels to one of the consultants responsible for bringing the chief to Milwaukee.

The transactions don't violate any laws, but they raise questions about why Flynn and the **Bradley Foundation**, the original funding source, would funnel the cash through two other nonprofits to pay **George Kelling**, a nationally recognized police consultant.

The payment was initiated shortly after **No Quarter** began asking about earlier grants to Kelling and his partner, **Robert Wasserman**, for their Milwaukee work. Even Kelling said last week that he was baffled by the unusual funding arrangement.

"It's the kind of thing that could raise questions," Kelling acknowledged. "It was a series of decisions I was not a part of."

Under the state's open records law, details about government contracts are available to the public. By contrast, many of the documents regarding this deal remain under wraps because it involved private funds.

Michael Grebe, president of the Bradley Foundation, said his organization was not trying to hide anything.

Bradley previously had paid Kelling directly for his Milwaukee work, but Grebe said the group decided to underwrite his work this time with a grant. That meant, he said, the funds had to go through another nonprofit. In the end, he said, the dollars then had to be kicked through a third organization before making it to the police strategist.

"It's a little convoluted, but it's not unusual," said Grebe, whose organization has long supported Kelling's

policing ideas.

This isn't the first time Flynn had a hand in lining up funding for one of his consultants. Over the years, Flynn or his agency has secured hundreds of thousands of dollars for Wasserman's firm. Wasserman has twice had a hand in selecting Flynn as a police chief.

The **Journal Sentinel** was able to track down the latest payment after spending weeks checking into an oblique reference to the transactions in an e-mail exchange between Flynn and Kelling from earlier this year. Since 2007, the **Bradley Foundation**, a conservative, Milwaukee-based group, had given \$309,470 directly to Kelling and Wasserman, who jointly recruited and recommended Flynn as Milwaukee's police chief. A little more than half of that sum was disclosed in news reports.

Late last year, No Quarter quizzed Flynn and Grebe about some of the additional payments that had not been reported in the press. Sheriffs and police chiefs elsewhere - including Los Angeles Chief **William Bratton** - have come under fire for their use of private funds and payments to consultants.

Both Flynn and Grebe brushed aside these concerns, saying the consultants had already wrapped up their work at the Milwaukee Police Department.

But that wasn't the case for long.

Records show that in January, Bradley officials informed the **Greater Milwaukee Foundation** they would be transferring funds to underwrite a new Kelling project. The check was cut a month later, prompting a letter from Flynn.

"I request the release of \$47,000 in funding to be used for the *Armed Robbery - Problem Solving Project* being implemented in Milwaukee by Dr. George Kelling," Flynn wrote to the Greater Milwaukee Foundation on Feb. 26.

Greater Milwaukee officials say they neither requested the funds nor understood why the Bradley Foundation chose to channel the cash through them. They sat on the money for 2½ months because their rules forbid them from giving grants to individuals.

At the direction of a Bradley Foundation staffer, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation sent the money to a third nonprofit, the **Northwest Side Community Development Corp.**, which forwarded the funds to Kelling's for-profit company, **Hanover Justice Group**.

On Friday, Flynn issued a statement defending his efforts to secure funding from private foundations for Kelling and Wasserman. He has denied there was a quid pro quo.

"George and Bob have been invaluable," Flynn said. "They've offered two lifetimes' worth of wisdom and expertise on effective police practices."

The shadow chiefs

Wasserman and Kelling were the driving force behind Flynn's selection as Milwaukee's police chief in 2007. While assisting the city with the search, both men encouraged Flynn to apply after the deadline had passed. The consultants then recommended him for the post.

Since Flynn took office a little more than 1½ years ago, he has leaned heavily on the pair. Without attracting much attention, they have helped him do everything from prepare testimony for the Common Council to work on improving MPD's crime data collection. All told, the pair has received at least \$356,000 over the past two

years from the Bradley Foundation for their Milwaukee work.

Some Milwaukee cops have even begun to refer to Kelling and Wasserman as shadow chiefs.

Flynn rejected this characterization.

"They don't lead the MPD. They don't motivate it. They don't organize, direct, staff, coordinate, or budget the activities of the MPD," the chief said. "Those are my responsibilities and mine alone. Consultants can only make suggestions and stimulate discussion."

What's clear, however, is that two consultants weren't turning to a stranger when they encouraged Flynn to apply here.

Wasserman, in particular, has long-standing professional and financial ties to the chief.

When Flynn was named police chief in Chelsea, Mass., back in 1993, Wasserman oversaw the selection process. The consultant then helped Flynn reorganize the police force there.

After that, Flynn hired Wasserman's firm for consulting work while running the Arlington, Va., police department and, later, paid the firm \$75,000 to provide advice while serving as Massachusetts' public safety director.

The **Boston Globe** also reported that about \$200,000 from a homeland security grant, awarded by Flynn's office, ended up with Wasserman's consulting shop. The firm used Flynn as a reference when it won an \$84,000, no-bid contract with another Boston government agency in 2004, the Globe reported.

The ties between Kelling, a Milwaukee native, and Flynn aren't as strong.

But Kelling refers to Flynn as the smartest police chief in the country, and Flynn is a die-hard advocate of Kelling's "broken windows" approach to crime-fighting. This theory holds that targeting minor crimes, such as vandalism, helps prevent more serious problems.

So far, the approach seems to be working in Milwaukee. The city has recorded major decreases in most categories of crime since Flynn took office.

In an interview last year, Flynn emphasized that he didn't bring the consultants to Milwaukee. That was the work of the Bradley Foundation, an early and strong advocate of broken-windows policing.

"They're the ones who found Bob Wasserman and George Kelling," Flynn said in December. "This was pre-existing."

Which is true.

In July 2007, the mayor announced that the Bradley Foundation would donate \$188,000 to pay for the pair to study crime and violence in Milwaukee. Along the way, Wasserman and Kelling agreed to assist with the search for a new chief.

"We suggested Kelling (and Wasserman) before we knew Flynn," Grebe said in a December interview.

Assisting with transition

Once Flynn was chosen, he asked the Bradley Foundation if the pair could assist him with his transition. Bradley ended up kicking an extra \$121,000 to the consultants to do this work.

The first-term chief frequently turned to the duo to determine how to respond to new situations.

"This sounds kind of neat&ensp.&ensp.&ensp. close," Flynn wrote in an e-mail to the two about joining a group organized by the conservative **Cato Institute** in Chicago. "Any land mines or concerns?"

On another occasion, Flynn noted that he was to appear before a Common Council committee: "I'll need some general remarks, bullet points."

A day later, Wasserman presented the chief with a series of talking points based on a list of ideas put together by Kelling.

The **Journal Sentinel** did not receive all of the e-mails among the three. The city withheld more than 80 messages because they were deemed personal or dealt with specific crime-fighting strategies. Releasing these records, Assistant Police Chief **Dale Schunk** wrote, "will create a heightened danger and increase the potential risk to the safety and welfare of the officers and the citizens they are protecting."

Finding funding

A number of the e-mails that were released focused on finding funds for Wasserman and Kelling.

Flynn said at one point that the Bradley Foundation was working with other organizations to try to provide money. The chief also organized a private meeting of many local groups in October to discuss paying for various initiatives. Wasserman set the agenda for the event, and he and his partner both made presentations.

In March 2008, Flynn discussed using other department resources for a study of the MPD.

"What do you think, how might we proceed, and how much should I set aside (in the absence of grants there's always seized assets, I guess)?" Flynn asked Kelling.

The Bradley Foundation quit paying the consultants in late July 2008, according to Grebe.

Records show Kelling, 73, sent a lengthy e-mail to **Janet Riordan** at the Bradley Foundation last summer saying he needed to pull back from his extensive involvement in Milwaukee.

But Kelling said last week that Flynn asked him late last year to study armed robberies in Milwaukee, and the Bradley Foundation soon agreed to pay for the project. In the meantime, Kelling took over sole ownership of Hanover Justice.

Kelling said he is not sure why it took so long to get paid for this study - only that this was a source of irritation.

This is reflected in some e-mails from earlier this year.

"Sorry to be a nag, but are things set up with the Police Foundation so that I can get reimbursed?" Kelling asked Flynn in early March.

Flynn responded less than an hour later, "I spoke to Jan on Thursday and sent the formal request via letter on Friday. I'll follow-up."

The chief was referring to Riordan, director of community programs at the Bradley Foundation and wife of conservative talk-show host **Charlie Sykes**.

Grebe, the head of the Bradley Foundation, said his group had originally paid Wasserman and Kelling directly

from its administrative account. With funds running low there, he said, the group decided to award Kelling a grant.

The foundation transferred the grant money in February to a specific account within the Greater Milwaukee Foundation known as the **Milwaukee Police Endowment Fund**. The city set up the fund to allow private contributions to help MPD. In the past, money from the account has been used to pay for the K-9 dog unit, reflective vests for officers riding motorcycles and **Operation Impact**, which put more cops and cameras in certain neighborhoods.

The police chief recommends to the Greater Milwaukee Foundation how to distribute donations to the fund. In this case, he said the money should go straight to Kelling.

When first contacted last month about the grant, Greater Milwaukee spokeswoman **Denise Callaway** said her office knew nothing about it. Later, though, she was able to confirm the transactions and provide copies of all correspondence on the deal.

Those letters show Greater Milwaukee did nothing with the money for months. Under its guidelines, Callaway said, the foundation cannot give funds to an individual or a for-profit company - as Flynn had asked it to do.

Howard Snyder, head of the Northwest Side Community Development Corp., said a staffer at Greater Milwaukee contacted him in May to ask if his agency would act as a conduit for these funds. Callaway said this arrangement was the idea of Riordan at the Bradley Foundation.

"Nonprofits like ours get asked to be fiscal agents all the time," Snyder said.

Kelling said he does not believe that all this grant money is a reward for recommending Flynn as Milwaukee's top cop.

"I suppose if one wanted to interpret it that way, one could," he said.

But he said it just made sense for Flynn, a newcomer to Milwaukee, to tap Wasserman for help with administration and organization and Kelling on problem-solving.

"I was eager to continue working," Kelling said.

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