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OHA trustee faces investigation into alleged misuse of state office

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By Rick Daysog, Reporter [CONNECT](#)

HONOLULU (HawaiiNewsNow) - A state Ethics Commission investigation is looking into whether Office of Hawaiian Affairs trustee and former state lawmaker Peter Apo conducted his private business out of his taxpayer-funded OHA office.

A complaint filed several months ago alleged that he used OHA's email system, staff and OHA's facilities for his consulting business. Ethics watchdogs said that would be illegal.

"Generally, you can't use state resources whether that's state time, equipment, your office, your computer, the state seal or whatever. You cannot use those things for your private purposes," said ex-investigative reporter and former Common Cause Hawaii director Ian Lind.

Apo denied the allegations but wouldn't discuss them in detail, citing the pending probe.

Sources told Hawaii News Now that investigators with the Ethics Commission recently accessed OHA's computers to obtain Apo emails.

Hawaii News Now has obtained some of those emails from OHA computers.

They confirm communications between Apo, using his company's email address, and local architect Robert Iopa.

Iopa is the chairman of Apo's election committee and his firm is part of a team that has a \$2.9 million dollar contract with OHA to master plan its Kakaako properties.

One of the emails, Apo appears to offer his services to a company affiliated with Iopa. Iopa and the company DTL were applying for a multi-million dollar federal grant to upgrade Waikiki's infrastructure, beaches and reefs.

"I'd like to learn to do the presentation as a DTL assignment," Apo wrote in a Feb. 25, 2015 email.

Said Lind: "Ethics isn't rocket science. If you're a public official or a public employee you're not supposed to mix your private business with your public business."

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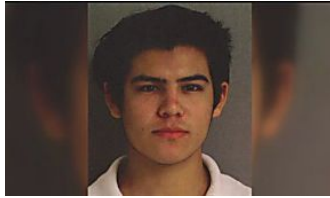
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