

# the davidsonian

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NOVEMBER 1,  
2017

## Save Davidson Update

Olivia Daniels-

Save Davidson, the grassroots movement formed in early 2017 to halt development on Beaty Street, has recently filed for 501(c)(4) status, which would establish it as an exempt social welfare organization with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). On the organization's website, an official statement explained, "We researched this carefully and learned that our citizens' organization is better served by having an official status."

The process of registration involves filing through the NC Secretary of State's Office. In Save Davidson, Inc.'s Articles of Incorporation, the organization names its incorporation attorney Roger W. Knight of Raleigh and lists its Principal Office to a Raleigh address.

While maintaining its non-partisan stance, Save Davidson has also endorsed candidates in the town's upcoming municipal elections, who are also non-partisan, through its website. However, several citizens, who wish to remain anonymous, have expressed concern about Roger Knight's non-local status and political history.

Save Davidson Chairman Denise Beall explained that the group had chosen to seek the legal counsel of Knight, as opposed to a more local attorney, to avoid "conflicts of interest." David Sitton, an active Save Davidson member and Town Board candidate, agreed with Beall, explaining that the group had considered many local attorneys, but many were "not willing to work with [Save Davidson]" because of its anti-development stance.

Beall explained that citizens have expressed discomfort that Knight has previously represented controversial figures, such as Pat McCrory, the former Republican NC Governor and HB2 architect, during the NC Board of Elections hearing on contested ballots.

2016 gubernatorial race. Both Beall and Sitton clarified that in working with Knig Davidson was “in no way assuming the position[s] of his previous clients.”

Beall explained that while some may question why Save Davidson is now registered at a Raleigh address, it is “typical to use your attorney as a registered agent...We are a Davidson-based organization.”

On October 17, 2017, attorney John R. Buric of the legal firm James, McElroy, & Associates filed a complaint with the NC Board of Elections against Save Davidson’s Beall and Meeker and the Board of Directors Donna Pollack on behalf of an anonymous client.

The complaint argues that since Save Davidson is engaged in self-described “Election Outreach,” has raised more than \$100 to influence the municipal elections, and has held candidate forums and events, all prior to its registration as a 501(c)(4), the organization should have been registered as a political action committee or an independent expenditure committee when the group was formed in February 2017. The complaint alleges that Davidson has violated election laws, according to *The Charlotte Observer*.

Jana Watt, Save Davidson’s official press contact, released a statement in response to the complaint: “The Save Davidson organization is in full compliance with all State and local reporting requirements. Save Davidson has filed its Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State and its application as a 501(c)(4) is pending with the Internal Revenue Service.”

Both Beall and Sitton concurred with the statement. Beall stated that “the complaint is baseless,” and expressed that the “freedom of speech and expression concerns” that the complaint is “exactly what we are fighting against.”

Sitton agreed, saying that “whenever you challenge the status quo, there’s pushback.”

Multiple sources, all of whom wish to remain anonymous, contacted *The Davidsonian* and emphasize several rumors of prominent members of the town community planning to send cease-and-desist letters to Save Davidson representatives. Most of these claims are apparently alleging libel against the figures in question on Save Davidson’s popular Facebook group, which currently boasts approximately 1,900 members.

Save Davidson is expected to spark some questions at the Town Commissioner Forum which will take place on Thursday, November 2, at the DCPC Congregation House at 7:00pm.

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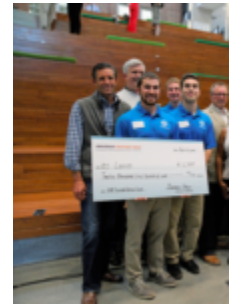
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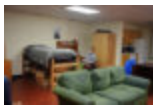
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