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Q&A

Miller pushes fight that could help save Vegas golf course

 By [William K. Wolfrum](#),
 Staff Writer,
[Golf Publisher Syndications](#)

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(Oct. 03, 2005) - When Walters Golf owner Billy Walters purchased the land that includes Royal Links Golf Club

in 1999, he did so at a price of \$5,600 an acre, but with a permanent deed restriction that he would keep the land as a golf course and charge acceptable prices for locals to play Royal Links.

 "All I can do with this property is operate a golf course. Nothing more, nothing less," Walters told the *Las Vegas Review Journal* that year.

At the time, former Las Vegas City Councilman Steve Miller called the \$894,000 transaction the "sweetheart of all sweetheart deals."

 Move ahead six years, and Walters is trying to get the city council to remove the deed restriction, which would free him up to [tear down Royal Links](#) and build homes. The removal of the restriction would reportedly cause the value of the land to skyrocket to between \$300,000 and \$400,000 an acre. The Clark County assessor's office now places the value of the Royal Links land at \$64 million.

During an Aug. 31 Las Vegas Council meeting, the motion to overturn the restriction once again was not introduced, and no definitive timetable has been established for when it will be voted on. Currently, there is a Las Vegas Metro police investigation on how the city council has handled the Walters' requests, but Miller has written that he believes the investigation is a smoke screen.

"I believe the LV Metro investigation into whether information was withheld from previous council agendas is a stall technique to prolong the council's action until it has been forgotten by the media and can be passed without public scrutiny," Miller wrote.

Through it all, Miller's stance has never changed. His basic thought on the Royal Links situation: Walters has long been a big donor to the political campaigns of Las Vegas politicians, thus paving the way for the original deal, and likely paving the way for the removal of the restriction, which could result in a \$40-50 million jackpot for Walters.

While his reputation in Las Vegas is either that of a moral watchdog or a loose canon depending who you speak to, Miller has kept searching away for new information. His digging into the situation has brought several things to light, notably that current Las Vegas mayor Oscar Goodman was Walters' defense attorney during the 1980s.

"(Goodman) has never disclosed this important fact which is a violation of the state ethics law," Miller said.

 Currently, Miller, 60, writes a column for [AmericanMafia.com](#), detailing what he considers shady deals in Las Vegas. The Royal Links situation has been a subject that Miller has come back to consistently. He spoke with [TravelGolf.com](#) recently about the future of the Royal Links course.

Q: You've said Billy Walters is a big contributor to the political campaigns of many Las Vegas politicians, how does he go about that?

Miller: What he'll do is very innocuous, is he'll give a party at (Cili Fine Dining at [Bali Hai Golf Club](#)) with the politicians attending. He'll then say his donation was \$300, but what he's done is invaluable because at these events are a lot of his cronies and at those parties is where I believe a lot of money changes hands. Then it becomes if they want to have him have these parties for them or their opponents, and the message is implied.

Q: So could these contributions play a part in getting the restriction removed, spelling the end of Royal Links?

Miller: I think the favors are being banked. The county commissioners, the city council members, the mayor, others who have been involved with (Walters) I think are just waiting to fulfill his request, to become somehow less indebted by doing a favor him and I think that the public interest is what makes the sacrifice.

In my research, I found that he had had some kind of third-party involvement or partnership with the mayor back in 1988, which was never disclosed. Which at this point indicates, having not disclosed such an involvement, it raises a red flag, at least for me, when there's a deal pending which could enrich Mr. Walters. It may not be a felony, but it's certainly something which he needed to put on the table.

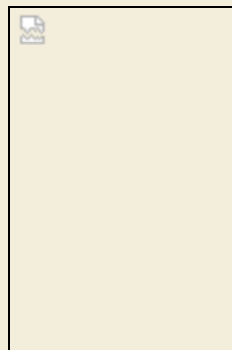
Q: What is the current status of the case?

Miller: If it comes on there I think that, having been on that council, a lot of things happen under the cover of

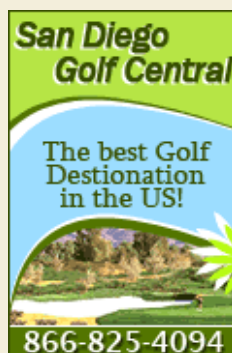
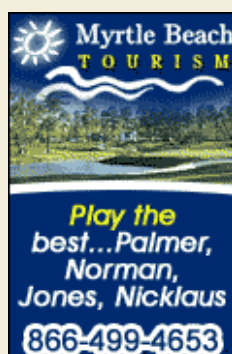
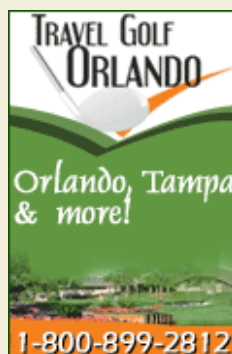

Steve Miller

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Billy Walters

darkness. If the story can be made to be old and the press is no longer interested or it has been upstaged by another story, a lot of things can sneak through.

I have a suspicion that that's what's being done here, that there's a stall technique taking place that will cause this particular approval to go through unnoticed. It causes me concern that he could get this approval to resell his property without very much public approval.

Q: A lot of people will say that, because of your status as an former council member, you are someone with a grudge.

Miller: I agree with them, I have a very big grudge against crooks. I was born that way and that's the way I'll be all my life. I carry a major grudge against bullies and crooks and whenever I see someone who I consider to be taking advantage of the taxpayers in the way they do it, it tells me 'well, I'm dealing with a crook, I have a grudge against this person and I'm going to do everything I can to try and stop them.' The way I do it nowadays is just getting the information out and hopefully embarrassing the politicians that are under that person's thumb.

Q: It's quite interesting that you write for a Web site called AmericanMafia.com.

Miller: Let's put it this way, I've yet to meet anyone that wants to be the subject of a story on American Mafia. It's not exactly the most positive venue, but it's good for me because I'm able to express myself about the inner workings of the city that people think are so pristine and what I saw years ago is that's the complete opposite of the truth.

Q: It seems like you believe that the rezoning of the Royal Links land will go through one way or another.

Miller: It won't surprise me because I'm the only voice in the wilderness. There's been a (Las Vegas) *Review-Journal* editorial against it, but they needed to harp on it more, like the weeklies and dailies of New York who will get on a subject and won't get off of it until they get their way. What I'd like is for that to happen in the media here.

It's very sad, I think that if I bought a home on a golf course, I'd expect it to remain a golf course. Again, in order for him to succeed in a political arena, he needs to call in all the favors he can, whether it be a judge or county commissioner that he may have helped get elected. And that's where his heavy involvement in politics comes in.

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