

NEWS & VIEWS

Former CSL candidate to appeal Quebec Court verdict

By Joel Goldenberg
The Suburban

Former Côte St. Luc council candidate Charles Lugassy will be appealing a guilty verdict issued earlier this month by Quebec Court judge Serge Cimon.

Lugassy was alleged to have spent about \$4,200 on his ultimately unsuccessful 2009 District 6 campaign — the limit was \$3,888. According to court documents, Lugassy bought 600 election posters and an election ad in The Suburban.

"I'm appealing on the basis there were no grounds whatsoever for this accusation," Lugassy told The Suburban Monday. "I was not in charge of the accounting, so I was not following up the matter myself."

According to the judgment, Lugassy was first his own official agent, and then asked an accountant to fulfill this function.

Lugassy argued during the case that he did not have enough training to be an official agent, and "relied totally" on his agent; that he was focused on the election campaign as opposed to the technicalities of the expenses; that creditors had to be paid; that he never intended to

commit an offence, and the error was due to inexperience.

Judge Cimon did not accept Lugassy's version of events, saying he attempted to show naivety and "absolute confidence" in his official agent, and minimized his involvement in expense decisions that he made himself.

"The defendant failed to act with due diligence to avoid committing the offence," the judge ruled.

A penalty is expected to be determined this week. In a 2012 council meeting, Councillor Dida Berku said it could likely be \$1,000 plus expenses.

In 2012, when Lugassy pleaded not guilty, he said the case was a vendetta from his election opponent "and all those around him, who are trying — for some reason, they were so scared in the last election — to [prevent me from running] in the [2013] election."

Lugassy also said at the time five other inquiries against him — regarding posters and other matters — were dismissed.

"I feel sorry for these people who are still trying to make sure I won't be a candidate in the next election. If it's not me,

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it will be someone else. This is a democracy... they overreacted, acting the way they did. It's unheard of for a candidate who was beaten in a municipal election to have had seven inquiries against him."

In another election-related case, Lugassy was banned from running for office for five years — relating to an

alleged benefit offered to then-candidate Sonia Cohen-Peillon to withdraw her candidacy. Lugassy denied the offer was made. Lugassy's other opponent was Glenn Nashen, who won the 2009 election and was acclaimed in 2013.

On Monday, Lugassy said the 2009 election took place a long time ago and is behind him.

"I have other matters to look after," he added. ■