

City to pay acquitted worker's legal bills

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The city will pick up the \$137,716 legal tab for San Diego City Council aide David Cowan, the only defendant acquitted in the City Hall corruption trial.

In response to a July 29 letter from Cowan's lawyer, Michael Crowley, the City Council voted unanimously in closed session Tuesday to reimburse Cowan for the cost of defending himself against a federal charge that he made a false statement to the FBI.

"I'm very grateful," Cowan said yesterday, declining to comment further.

Cowan was an aide to the late Councilman Charles Lewis, who was also a defendant in the case. He now serves on the staff of Lewis' successor, Tony Young.

Cowan was a peripheral figure in the corruption case. His fellow defendants, former City Councilmen Ralph Inzunza and Michael Zucchet, and Las Vegas lobbyist Lance Malone, were convicted July 18 of multiple counts of extortion, wire fraud and wire-fraud conspiracy in connection with a scheme to trade money for efforts to repeal a law banning touching between strippers and club patrons. They are scheduled to be sentenced in November.

The government had argued that Cowan made a false statement by saying he never discussed the no-touch law with Malone. Cowan was motivated to lie to protect his boss and himself, and the recorded conversations show Cowan and Malone discussed the no-touch law twice, the government said.

Crowley argued that Cowan never discussed the no-touch issue with Malone. It was Malone, he said, who made two references "in passing" and a discussion never followed.

Jurors said they began deliberations with the Cowan matter, and quickly decided to acquit.

None of the council members could be reached for comment yesterday.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

The government had argued that [David Cowan] made a false statement by saying he never discussed the no-touch law with [Lance Malone]. Cowan was motivated to lie to protect his boss and himself, and the recorded conversations show Cowan and Malone discussed the no-touch law twice, the government said.

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