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Walter: computer shows Cardin used town hall office for non-town work

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Complaining he's tired of his opponent's jabs at him for being "a part-time supervisor" — a charge he vehemently denies — Supervisor Sean Walter released documents he says were found on former supervisor Phil Cardin computer at Riverhead Town Hall. The documents, he says, prove his pre was doing non-town work inside town hall, on town time and even using town personnel.

The documents appear to consist of speeches, opinion columns, letters to a 12-page list of names and addresses labeled "new donors," and a blank commercial lease for a shopping center in Mattituck owned by Cardinale's

Cardinale says Walter doesn't know what he's talking about.

"I never had a computer at town hall. I didn't use a computer at town hall," said in a phone interview Monday. "Where this hodgepodge of material came a question, but it did not come from my computer. I did not even have a computer assigned to me, because I lacked computer skills or even keyboarding skills," Cardinale said.

The former supervisor said his secretary or assistant would print out his e-mails and give them to him. And the secretary or assistant did all the typing.

"There were four computers in that office," he said. "They were used by my secretary, my executive assistant, my administrative assistant and Vince [who served as a town "ombudsman" during the Cardinale administration]," the supervisor said. Those four computers were used by a dozen different people with those job titles during his six-year tenure, Cardinale said — but never by the

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"As usual, Sean, as a part-time, distracted supervisor, failed to get the facts just as he did with Bruno, the dog he executed," Cardinale said, referring to the dog at the town shelter that was put down last December. (Walter said at a Town meeting in January that the dog had bitten a child, but that was not true. The owner, a 22-year-old man, was injured as he attempted to break up a fight between Bruno and another dog, according to a health department report. Walter said he had been misinformed by then-animal control officer Lou Coronese.)

"If these documents were produced using town employees because Phil doesn't know how to use a computer or keyboard, that's even worse," Walter shot back. "It's bad enough he's doing political work on the taxpayer's dime, but to have town employees doing it for him, that's even more illegal," Walter said in a phone interview Monday evening.

Town employees don't have stand-alone desktop computers, Walter said. Their documents are saved to the town hall's main-frame computer server. The documents released by Walter were located on the server's public drive in a folder called "Phil's documents," he said.

Cardinale would not say, after examining the documents, whether they were generated in his office at his direction.

"I can't attest to what they contain. They might have been altered by anyone," Cardinale said.

Walter said he doesn't know who created the documents, he only found them on the server, but most appear to be his predecessor's political writings and notes prepared for campaign speeches.

One begins with the question, "Why keep me your Supervisor?" It lists six names and refers to "council candidates Vince Tria and Bill Belmont," as well as an opponent, who is not named. Tria and Belmont were Cardinale's running mates in 2005, when he was challenged by then-councilman Ed Densieski in the primary election.

Another is a draft of a column written for the News-Review in response to a letter published by then-candidate Walter in 2009.

"But my question is this," Cardinale said, "What is his point? And in pursuing his government purpose was this compiled," Cardinale asked. "Was town staff time used to do it?"

Cardinale says Walter is just trying to deflect his criticism about working part-time on the full-time job of town supervisor.

"He's too often in the western town hall, in his Wading River law office," Cardinale said. The former supervisor also charged Walter with refusing to disclose his law clients are, and redacting their names from his financial disclosure report.

"How are we supposed to know if his actions and votes are in the interests of the people of Riverhead or in the interests of his clients," Cardinale asked.

Walter, who says he spends no more than 10 hours a week in his law office before or after regular business hours and on Saturdays, argues Cardinale is twisting the facts.