

Everett Mayor Carlo DeMaria settles defamation suit against newspaper for \$1.1 million

The Everett Leader Herald will shut down after 139 years as part of the settlement

By **Maddie Khaw** Globe Correspondent, Updated December 15, 2024, 1 hour ago



Under the terms of the settlement, the Leader Herald's owner, Matthew Philbin, and its publisher and editor, Joshua Resnek, who are both named in the suit, will shut down the weekly newspaper within a week. BILLIONPHOTOS.COM - STOCK.ADOBE.COM

Everett Mayor Carlo DeMaria will receive \$1.1 million in a settlement resolving his defamation lawsuit against the Everett Leader Herald newspaper, which also agreed to cease publication after 139 years as part of the deal, the mayor's lawyers said Sunday.

Under the terms of the settlement, the Leader Herald's owner, Matthew Philbin, and its publisher and editor, Joshua Resnek, who are both named in the suit, will shut down the weekly newspaper within a week. DeMaria agreed not to move forward with a trial, which was scheduled to start in Middlesex Superior Court in January, according to a statement from his attorneys.

The suit, initially filed by DeMaria three years ago and later amended, alleges "an extraordinarily blatant conspiracy" by Philbin and Resnek to defame DeMaria by continuously publishing knowingly false articles asserting as "fact" that he had taken kickbacks and extorted other public officials.

Their goal, according to the suit, was to remove DeMaria from office, in part "to corruptly protect their own personal business interests" in Everett.

Philbin, Resnek, and the attorneys representing them could not be reached for comment on the settlement on Sunday.

The \$1.1 million that the parties agreed upon is an unusually large financial settlement, and closing the paper is an "extraordinary remedy," said Jeff Robbins, an attorney for DeMaria, in an interview Sunday evening.

"But the evidence in this case, which was extraordinary itself, reflected a three-year-long purposeful, intentional campaign to fabricate articles accusing the mayor of crimes that the defendants knew were fabricated," Robbins said.

Robbins also cited emails between Philbin and Resnek that boasted of "devastating" and "crushing" the mayor, and of unleashing a "Holocaust" of lies to disparage his career.

"This was never a case about a slip of the pen, or about inadvertence, or about a mistake of any kind," Robbins said. "These were articles conceived for a very purpose — and moreover, for the purpose of taking out somebody who the defendants felt was acting unfavorable to the business interests of the owner of the paper."

DeMaria and his lawyers will hold a news conference in Boston on Monday afternoon to discuss the settlement.

Resnek, who writes and edits most of the Leader Herald's articles, has frequently used the nickname "Kickback Carlo" to refer to DeMaria, a moniker representing Resnek's claims that DeMaria had received illegal payments in real estate deals.

Records show that Resnek has admitted to knowingly reporting falsehoods and fabricating quotes.

"Mr. Resnek wrote what he wrote because he believed Mr. DeMaria was bad for the City of Everett and he was motivated by the fanciful notion that he could bring about Mr. DeMaria's defeat in the [2021] election for Mayor," the defendants' lawyers wrote in court documents.

Lawyers for the paper's publishers argued DeMaria suffered "little to no damage due to the allegedly defamatory articles," according to court documents.

Robbins, though, described what he characterized as substantial harm — including an instance in which DeMaria's father told him, "If what I'm reading is true, you're not my son." Court documents also allege DeMaria suffered "significant emotional distress" leading to medical issues including chest pains, heart palpitations, and worsening depression and anxiety.

"This is reputational toothpaste that you can't put back into a tube," Robbins said. "When you've been subjected to this sort of thing, you can't repair that damage. You can't get back the tears — literally, tears shared with family members and humiliation and helplessness."

Robbins said the role of press freedom to protect citizens from abusive or antidemocratic governance is especially important in the current political landscape. But the Leader

Herald case, in his view, illustrates the potential for the media to cause harm if “they themselves are not prevented from abusing power,” Robbins said.

“I, like other people, note the lack of trust that Americans have in the media, wrongly or rightly or both,” he said. “This is the kind of set of facts which really does damage to journalists who work their tails off to do the right thing.”

Madeline Khaw can be reached at maddie.khaw@globe.com. Follow her [@maddiekhaw](https://twitter.com/maddiekhaw).

[Show comments](#)