

Where is the Ethical Reporting?

Seek Truth and Report It:

Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

--Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics

The purpose of the court system is to uphold the rule of law. Unlike the media, courts are the forum to resolve disputes and to enforce laws in a fair and rational manner. The court system provides an impartial forum distant from rampant media sensationalism. Do modern journalists check their sources? Do editors advocate to present an unbiased account of the facts? Or, is the pressure to sell news and generate advertising income just too much to overcome? Maybe it is just a journalist's desire for attention, or maybe it's simply a character issue. Or, maybe journalists just don't care. Whatever the reason, freedom of the press has, of late, become merely an excuse to lambaste and create gross distortions of the truth. Why not let the court system work and report on its findings? Wouldn't the truth be more interesting to read? It is to those interested in the truth.

For example, what if the Piedmont Gazette's journalist(s) read and understood the legal pleadings and the law? Wouldn't the reporting be more accurate? To demonstrate, Tim Farley just wrote in the Piedmont Gazette published 12/14/17 that "District Judge Paul Hesse dismissed defendant Susan Hellen from the case" filed by PLACES. Is that the truth? No. The judge accepted Susan Hellen's disclaimer of any interest related to the Piedmont Park Project. Based upon that disclaimer, it was agreed Susan Hellen would subsequently be dismissed from the lawsuit. Note: Hellen's *motion to dismiss* was denied because she submitted an invoice in her name to "help a friend get paid."

Farley additionally writes 12/14/17 in the Gazette that PLACES' counsel "declined to comment on the finances and referred inquiries to the Piedmont park group." Is that true? No. Farley was instructed to follow the directions previously published by PLACES to examine the park financials. Did he? No. Instead, having waited until the last minute and trying to beat a publication deadline, Farley opted to place an 11th hour phone call to Eric Anderson. Farley could and should have properly planned and took the time to request an appointment with Piedmont Park Project organizers to responsibly review the park's financial records. He didn't. Maybe such a maneuver makes for a better tabloid headline, that is, "Where's the money?" rather than a responsible news article entitled, "Park money used as intended."

Next, Farley writes 12/14/17 that "Garcia said she was encouraged by a comment Correa (PLACES' legal counsel in Texas) made during a telephone call between the two lawyers" and that "During one of [their] short calls, he made the comment that he looks forward to a possible resolution." Did Farley take the time to find out if any such telephone call(s) ever took place? No. Because, if he had, he would have learned that Garcia was again not being truthful, at all, in her communications with him. Wouldn't it be interesting to know that no telephone calls ever took place? Yes. Our lawyers in Texas are consulting their media division to consider what action to take. Responsible journalism is not just a course in high school or college. It is a legal duty as well as an ethical duty.

Piedmont Park Project organizers are not eager to accommodate the Piedmont Gazette and Tim Farley due to their continued engagement in dishonest and unethical reporting thus far. PLACES will not willingly engage in Terri Garcia's and the Piedmont Gazette's foolishness and public display of lack of integrity.

And, do the citizens of Piedmont want to know if the Piedmont Gazette or Farley ever once researched into whether See Spray deserves to be paid for shoddy work? No, they failed to responsibly research the truth. If such had been done, they would have learned that McKenna General Contracting's representative has specifically stated it is the worst work she had ever seen and See Spray doesn't deserve to be paid.

What if Piedmont Gazette or Farley looked into what has taken so long for Garcia and See Spray, LLC to be served regarding the defamatory statements made against PLACES and its organizers? They might have been able to find out that a gun was pulled on an officer of the court and that local police were required to get involved.

The truth: See Spray and Garcia couldn't care less about the Piedmont community. If they did, See Spray would have done the work correctly the first time knowing that our communities' children would be running around and playing at the Park. See Spray doesn't care. Garcia doesn't care. And, evidently, the Piedmont Gazette and Farley don't care. Garcia absolutely knows the lien filing is preventing the City of Piedmont from accepting the Park donation, but claims, "she's surprised the park remains closed." She then demands, "Pay the people who did the work and open the park. It's that simple." So, the next time the Piedmont Gazette and Farley start writing articles about See Spray not being paid, ask yourself, "Exactly why do they want a company, having admitted to its own negligence, to be paid for doing defective and sub-standard work?" What are the motives for the Gazette and its journalists to try to run down city leaders and Piedmont public volunteers in favor of these out-of-state interests? And, if the Piedmont Gazette and Farley are so compelled to See Spray and Garcia paid, why don't they donate the money to pay them?

PLACES, however, has a legal obligation to protect the Park's finances from waste. And, that is what PLACES is doing and will continue to do. PLACES will **not** be bullied by See Spray, Terri Garcia, the Piedmont Gazette, or Tim Farley into doing something that is not in the best interests of the Piedmont community.

We continue to thank the community of Piedmont and its wonderful citizens for their steadfast support and patience as we address each and every legal step for Piedmont Community Park's deeding to the City of Piedmont. We will always publish updates on the legal proceedings.

Sincerely,

Piedmont Park Project Steering Committee

