

August 3, 2022



Volume 39
Issue 25

Iowa Newspaper Association Bulletin

www.INAnews.com

CALENDAR of EVENTS

MEETINGS

INA, INF, INA Services
Company Board Meetings
November 11, 2022

WEBINARS

Getting Started with
Digital Sales
August 18, 2022

Journalism Camp brings together 72 students

The Iowa Newspaper Foundation was proud to support Media Now, an intense training for high school journalism students on campus at Drake University. For four days, 72 students from the Midwest came together to learn from leaders in the industry, experience journalism hands-on and network with other aspiring journalists.

Students had the option of participating in 11 different class concentrations including,

- Advising Publications
- Communications
- Design
- Editorial Leadership
- Photography Advanced
- Photography Essentials
- Sports Journalism
- Video & Podcasting
- Writing Advanced
- Writing Essentials + Yearbook

Of the 72 students, 31 were from Iowa and because of the support from Iowa newspapers four of those Iowa students, who otherwise would not have been able to attend, were able to participate at no cost. We thank you for investing in the industry's future!



This program was made possible by the generous support of the Chris Mudge Next Generation Fund. Learn more about the fund and how to help support future journalists on page 4.

The Iowa Newspaper Association's mission is to advocate the continued importance of thriving newspaper enterprises in Iowa dedicated to the First Amendment and to provide guidance to members and direction to the association's two related boards.

meeting minutes

Iowa Newspaper Association Board of Directors Meeting | July 22, 2022



INA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

The INA Board met at the Downtown Des Moines Marriott at 9:02 a.m. with the following members present: Brad Hicks, Algona Kossuth County Advance; Zack Kucharski, Cedar Rapids Gazette; Christopher Hall, Charles City Press; Matt Grohe, Clear Lake Mirror Reporter; Debbie Anselm, Davenport Quad-City Times; Bob Woodward, Dubuque Telegraph Herald; Trevis Mayfield, Maquoketa Sentinel-Press; and Jeff Wagner, Sheldon N'West Iowa REVIEW. Also present were Kris Maggard, INA Services Co, and Susan Patterson Plank, INA.

Votes taken:

- A. On a motion by Mayfield, seconded by Grohe, the minutes of the April 28, 2022 board meeting were approved.
- B. On a motion by Woodward, seconded by Hall, the board approved the Finance Committee's recommendation regarding the investment policy.

Action agreed upon:

- A. The board reviewed upcoming board terms and directed staff to work with the Nominating Committee to fill board openings with the goal of having 11 directors.
- B. The board discussed items of interest that came out of the roundtable discussions and sessions from the 2022 INA Conference that should be captured for future discussion including shared content ideas, photo pools, brand development and general marketing with the new research.
- C. The board agreed that its next board meeting would be November 11, 2022 in Des Moines.

Other items discussed:

- A. The board heard an update from Patterson Plank the organization including its financials.
- B. The board heard an update from Patterson Plank regarding planned legislative outreach.
- C. The board heard an update from Anselm on upcoming strategic planning.
- D. The board heard an update from Wagner on the INA Digital Membership Ad Hoc Committee.
- E. The board received a board attendance report.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:28 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Patterson Plank

Congratulations to Iowa Golden Quill and Golden Dozen award winners

Congratulations to Scott Campbell of Eldridge North Scott Press for winning the 2022 Golden Quill Award and to Chip Rowe, Peter Weinschenk, Mark Ridolfi, Gordon Cameron, Kendra Breitsprecher, Patrick J. Grubb, Geoffrey Woehl, David Peck, Paul MacNeill and Reed Anfinson for winning Golden Dozen Awards. Visit <https://gq.iabc.com/Winners> to view the full list of winners.

CONTACT US



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Website www.INAnews.com

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Technology & Digital Development Manager

Susan James,
ext. 129, sjames@cnaads.com

BOARD PRESIDENTS

Iowa Newspaper Association

Debbie Anselm, Davenport Quad-City Times
563-383-2224 | deb.anselm@lee.net

INA Services Company

Ron Gutierrez, Clinton Herald
563-242-7101 | rgutierrez@cnhi.com

Iowa Newspaper Foundation

Randy Evans, Iowa Freedom of
Information Council
515-745-0041 | iowafoicouncil@gmail.com

U.S. MAIL

Iowa Newspaper Association
319 East 5th St.
Des Moines, IA 50309

INA LEGAL HOTLINE

515-283-3100 (paid service)

Report for America opens newsroom applications, expands the opportunity to hire more journalists

National service program recruits talented, diverse reporters—helps fund salaries

Report for America has opened applications for news organizations interested in partnering to host emerging and experienced journalists in their newsrooms for up to three years, beginning next summer.

Report for America is a national service program that places talented journalists—corps members—into local newsrooms to report on under-covered issues and communities. Through the program, host newsrooms receive:

- Service-minded reporters, photographers and videographers
- Diverse, hand-picked candidates from a pool of emerging and experienced journalists
- Subsidized salary support, up to half for the first year
- Local fundraising coaching and resources
- Extra training and mentoring for journalists

“Report for America provides a unique opportunity for newsrooms to bring journalists on staff at a time when the need for local, trusted news is more important than ever,” said Earl Johnson, director of admissions for Report for America. “Through our support, news organizations are better positioned to cover important issues, diversify their newsrooms, and grow sustainable, local support within their communities.”

The application deadline is Oct. 3, 2022, and newsrooms will be publicly announced in December. More information about how the program works can be found by visiting <https://www.reportforamerica.org/news-rooms/>.

While all local news organizations are eligible to apply, Report for America is increasing its focus on supporting Black-owned and Latino-owned newsrooms and expanding its reach into rural areas where news holes can be huge. Prospective newsrooms must identify specific community coverage gaps, drawing attention to under-covered communities or issues.

Additionally, newsrooms must demonstrate:

- **NEED** — Explain why the beat you're proposing is vital to your audience and the community. Report for America is particularly interested in important beats that no other newsroom in your area is covering or covering well. Also, why do you need help to support this position?
- **SUPPORT** — Report for America looks for newsrooms where corps members will receive good editing and mentoring to do their best work.
- **A COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION** — Newsrooms

demonstrating a commitment to inclusion and supporting a diverse staff are important in the selection process.

- **A COMMITMENT TO FUNDRAISING** — Report for America asks its host newsrooms, where applicable, to try to raise money from local funders to pay for part of their corps member's salary. Our development team can help you do this. Report for America believes local philanthropy is key to strong local newsrooms and wants to work with partners that believe this, too.

Beats to consider can include, but are not limited to: healthcare, education, communities of color, immigration, economic development, local government, religion, obituaries, military and veteran affairs, or even sports reporting. Newsrooms are encouraged to consider hosting multiple journalists.

Report for America looks to reinvent local journalism by creating a sustainable business model that taps into the communities served by newsrooms. This includes providing up to half of the corps member's salary and providing tools and resources for newsrooms to raise funds locally to support their share.

Report for America is currently fielding some 300 corps members in more than 200 newsrooms across the country. They work in all mediums, for newsrooms of all sizes — and are making a big impact, newsrooms say.

“It has been a game changer,” said Dr. Paulette Brown-Hinds, publisher of Black Voice News, of partnering with Report for America. “The quality of reporter that we're able to afford, we couldn't afford before. It's been such a boost to our newsroom.”

Report for America plans to hold online information sessions with newsrooms and partner organizations throughout the application period. To begin the application process or to learn more information, news organizations can visit www.reportforamerica.org or send an email to: recruitment@reportforamerica.org.

ABOUT REPORT FOR AMERICA

Report for America is a national service program that places talented emerging journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered topics and communities across the United States and its territories. By creating a new, sustainable model for journalism, Report for America provides people with the information they need to improve their communities, hold powerful institutions accountable, and restore trust in the media. Report for America is an initiative of The GroundTruth Project, an award-winning nonprofit journalism organization dedicated to rebuilding journalism from the ground up.

Mudge-Monroe family continues their Next Generation Fund

In 2016, on the occasion of her retirement from her role as Executive Director of the Iowa Newspaper Association, Chris Mudge, with characteristic humility, quietly sent a message to board members and the INA management team to announce that she and her husband, Bill Monroe, would be pledging \$25,000 toward the work of the Iowa Newspaper Foundation.

Chris spent her entire 34-year career with the Iowa Newspaper Association, working to help Iowa newspapers make a difference in their communities. She was employed at the Iowa Newspaper Association in Des Moines from 1982 until her retirement in 2016 rising through the ranks from an advertising sales representative to become executive director.

Chris (Mudge) Monroe passed away March 7, 2019 following an inspiring battle with metastatic breast cancer. At the Iowa Newspaper Association, Chris left

a legacy of hard work, foresight and humility that still resonates today and her courageous battle with cancer continues to inspire all of us.

With 60 years of combined service to the INA between them, Chris and Bill have consistently displayed exceptional leadership and uncanny foresight. The Chris Mudge Next Generation Fund, which was established in 2015 to honor Chris, will be used to create an endowment to support the Iowa Newspaper Foundation's dedication to fostering quality journalism education for future generations to come. Since the fund was established, donors have continued to contribute, allowing the INF to focus on youth programs that ensure our community's future journalists are educated about the newspaper industry and encouraged to join its ranks.

To donate to the Chris Mudge Next Generation Fund visit <https://tinyurl.com/nextgenerationfund>.

Bettendorf Community School District sued for blocking journalists

The Iowa Freedom of Information Council and four Quad Cities news companies sued the Bettendorf Community School District and its board of directors Monday for blocking journalists from covering a recent meeting at which parents expressed concern about violence in the district's middle school.

Joining the 46-year-old nonprofit advocacy organization as plaintiffs in the lawsuit are the Quad-City Times and television stations KWQC, WQAD and WHBF. Defendants are the school district and the seven members of its school board.

The lawsuit grows out of a meeting on May 25 that was attended by 200 to 300 parents, along with a majority of the members of the school board and Superintendent Michelle Morse. School employees were stationed at the doors of the Waterfront Center to keep reporters and photographers from entering the meeting.

The gathering was held one day after the massacre at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, killed 21 students and teachers. The meeting in Bettendorf followed mounting complaints from parents during the recently completed academic year about the lack of adequate response by school officials to rowdy behavior that left some students and their parents fearful.

The lawsuit asks the Scott County District Court to find the school district in violation of Iowa's open meetings law and to issue an injunction prohibiting the school board from violating the statute in the future. The lawsuit also asks the court to fine members of the board who took part in the meeting.

In a letter sent to Superintendent Morse and school



board president Rebecca Eastman a week after the May 25 meeting, the Iowa FOI Council and managers of the news companies expressed "profound disappointment" with Bettendorf officials' decision to keep journalists from covering the meeting.

"The topic discussed on the evening of Wednesday, May 25, was one of the fundamental responsibilities of the Bettendorf Community School District — ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the district's 4,700 students during each school day," the letter stated.

The letter continued, "It would stretch believability to think that spending a couple of hours listening to the concerns of parents about the behavior of some Bettendorf Middle School students — including bullying and injuries suffered by students not otherwise involved in the incidents — does not fall within the meaning of deliberations on matters clearly within the scope of the Board of Education's policy-making duties."

Randy Evans, the executive director of the Iowa FOI Council, said the authors of Iowa's open meetings law recognized the important work journalists do in informing the public about the issues and problems government faces and the potential solutions. But that cannot occur when government officials deny journalists access to meetings like the one held in Bettendorf.

Evans noted that the very first paragraph of the open meetings law states that any ambiguity in the interpretation of the statute should be resolved in favor of openness.

NOTE: A copy of the lawsuit and the letter filed as part of the court case are attached in this week's Bulletin.

FREE MEMBER EXCHANGE

▼ HELP WANTED

EDITOR. Harlan Publishing, a family-owned newspaper in western Iowa, has an opening for its top newsroom position. This is an exciting opportunity for either an up-and-coming journalist or a veteran who is excited about telling stories across multiple platforms. Harlan Newspapers boasts a fun work environment in a great town that's just small enough to be home but close enough to both Omaha and Des Moines for day trips.

We're looking for a journalist that's adept at posting content to social media and then polishing that content for our print editions. We offer health care, a 401(K) program with a company match and paid time off. If you're ready to join an award-winning news media operation as it expands coverage across its digital and print platforms, we want to hear from you.

This position is best for someone who likes to tell stories and includes regular reporting and coverage of community issues and events. The editor coordinates coverage with our freelance writers and summer intern. We will train the successful candidate on any of the skills they're lacking. While the role accommodates some remote work, especially during a pandemic or natural disaster, the position will be based in Harlan, with day-to-day attendance in the office necessary. 07.30

FULL-TIME STAFF WRITER. The Oskaloosa Herald and Ottumwa Courier have two full-time staff writer openings on its regional news staff. We're seeking reporters who live for the next good story to contribute stories to our news and magazine products. The Ottumwa Courier and Oskaloosa Herald share a regional newsroom that creates content for our newspaper and magazine products, with reporters located in either Ottumwa or Oskaloosa. Occasional remote work is possible depending on the situation, but we generally expect reporters to maintain office hours in either Ottumwa or Oskaloosa, Iowa.

Our newsroom gives you the freedom to pursue projects you're interested in that go beyond your day-to-day responsibilities. We are a 21st-century newsroom that seeks to break the news that matters to our community. This is a great opportunity for a reporter to acquire quality experience and become a versatile multi-media journalist.

This position is best suited for entry-level journalists who were active at their college's campus media (newspaper, TV, radio, etc.) or for early-career journalists looking for an exciting challenge. A bachelor's degree in journalism, mass communications, or related field, is preferred. Though we will consider those who have relevant experience and a passion for journalism in lieu of a degree.

To apply, send a cover letter describing qualifications for the position, a resume, and 3-4 writing samples to Editor Kyle Ocker by email to kocker@ottumwacourier.com. 0505

GROUP PUBLISHER. Woodward Communications, Inc., an employee-owned media company, is looking for a dynamic Group Publisher to lead their Southwest Wisconsin weekly locations in print, digital, and video publishing along with community events. This key position will lead a group of dedicated employee owners in the Platteville, Prairie du Chien and Richland Center markets from a local office to be agreed upon.

A pivotal leadership role in the divisions, it is important to the success of our employee owners, company, and the communities we serve. Our new Group Publisher needs to be present and active in the community, able to communicate well, both verbally and in writing, with internal and external stakeholders. He or she also needs to be able to share a vision, set goals and help the group achieve them in this ever changing environment.

A background in media (print, digital, radio or television) is preferred but not required. An ability to think creatively, promote a team atmosphere, act with purpose and integrity are important to the role.

Competitive salary, healthcare, 401(k), paid time off are included in the total benefits package. Also included is stock ownership in the entire company, which includes radio, niche publishing, and agency services.

To learn more contact Bob Woodward, VP-Community Media, at 563/543-2194 or at bob.woodward@wcinet.com. To view the job description and submit your application please use the following link: <https://bit.ly/3slvoMF> 0505

GENERAL MANAGER/ADVERTISING SALES DIRECTOR.

Ogden Newspapers, Inc. is hiring a General Manager/Advertising Sales Director, in Marshalltown, Iowa. The primary role of this position will be to support, plan, and execute advertising initiatives and entire newspaper functionality.

Primary expectations and responsibilities include:

Day-to-day management of business office, editorial, circulation and advertising team

Work with departments to ensure newspaper is meeting company expectations

Handle multiple priorities simultaneously

Manage revenues and expenses for all departments

Set monthly, quarterly, and annual goals for each department

Track progress of goals for each department

Complete administrative tasks/reports as required

Motivate and "lead by example" to ensure the newspaper

is focused on our readers and staff who serve the local community, along with the leading the sales team to grow current customers while cultivating new clientele while maintaining long-term client relationships

Coordinate print and digital special sections and promotions, along with preprints, while executing company-wide sales initiatives

Provide excellent customer experience

Attend and participate in community and business functions

Qualifications:

Previous leadership and sales experience required

Ability to meet demands of deadlines and coordinate multiple priorities in a dynamic environment while maintaining a positive attitude

Results oriented and high achiever

Strong problem-solving, decision-making abilities, and marketing skills.

Communicate effectively with peers, superiors, and customers

Considered to be a strong coach/motivator and inspire others to achieve results

Maintain dependability and professionalism

Knowledge of Microsoft Office/Teams

Ability to learn new computer programs

The Marshalltown Times Republican offers a friendly working environment. This position is ideal for those looking for an opportunity to help lead the newspaper staff and local businesses succeed in their marketing efforts. We offer a competitive salary with commission opportunities. Benefits include health, dental, vision and life insurance as well as paid vacation, sick leave, and 401K.

If you are looking to lead, grow and deliver custom solutions to local businesses, please email your cover letter and resume to Terry Christensen by Friday, August 12. 0915

NEWS EDITOR. The Daily Freeman-Journal is looking for a full-time news editor in Webster City. The news editor will be responsible for journalistic reporting, news writing, photography, and page design. The news editor will work to ensure the newsroom's tradition of quality, accuracy, and

MEMBER EXCHANGE - cont. on page 6



Iowa Newspaper Association

Bulletin

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IN THIS ISSUE...

- Getting Started with Digital Sales

2022 IOWA MARKET STUDY - CODA RESEARCH
Slides from the 2022 Iowa Market Research Study are available behind the "Member's Only" section of our website.

REMINDER:
The Bulletin will be published every other week during the summer months.

MEMBER EXCHANGE - cont. from page 5

community trust.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Manages and coordinates coverage of local news throughout the coverage area
- Writing and editing news stories
- Taking photographs to supplement news articles
- Page design

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Two years of full-time journalism experience preferred
- Ability to multi-task and work efficiently under deadlines
- Self-motivation and self-direction
- Applies innovative and creative thinking to tasks
- Communicate and share ideas with team members
- Strong writing and editing skills
- Experience with InDesign preferred

BENEFITS:

- We offer Competitive Compensation
- Paid Vacations • 401 K
- Health, Dental & Vision Insurance
- Paid Sick Leave • Paid Holidays

Please submit a resume to: Bill Shea at
bshea@messengernews.net

NEWS EDITOR. News Editor opportunity for experienced journalist who enjoys working and living in a progressive community of 2,800 a short distance from Iowa City. Needs the ability to write news of local government, school boards of four communities and be a feature story writer. Ability to handle photography helpful. Send resumes and writing samples to Publisher Ronald C. Slechta at publisher@thenews-ia.com or call 319-656-2273 or (c) 319-400-7072. Pay depends on experience.

PUBLISHER. Are you a strong advertising manager or salesperson looking for a move up? Growing Iowa media company is searching for a leader who recognizes the vital blend of news and advertising. Our candidate will be computer literate, understands the digital landscape and works well with others. We're looking for someone to lead by example and immerse themselves in the community. A working knowledge of central printing plants a plus. Bring your own team with you is a real possibility. The right candidate is creative, hands-on and able to develop a dynamic staff. Duties will involve the direction of three community newspapers, two shoppers, a central printing plant, a plethora of special sections and digital products. Privately held, local company offers top compensation, bonus, health, life and 401K. Send resume and cover letter to: christopherhall@charlescitiypress.com. Enterprise Media Inc. We want to meet you!

PUBLISHER. The Humboldt Independent and Reminder is seeking an experienced publisher. This is a working position that will require news writing skills, an appreciation of advertising and basic management skills. A strong news and advertising staff is in place. There will be an opportunity for sweat-equity ownership as well as a solid starting salary with benefits. We would consider a rising star with minimal experience with whom we would work with and train. This publishing business does well in excess of \$1 million in annual sales and has a solid history of profitability. Ownership is a nearby family newspaper...not a chain. Apply with resume to: Kristin Grabinoski, krisg@armstrongjournal.com or Jerry Wiseman, news3456@mchsi.com.

▼ FOR SALE

FOR SALE-HAND OPERATED ADVANTAGE PAPER CUTTER WITH A PATENT OF JULY 23, 1889. 2 blades included. Works fine. Best offer. Must come and get it. Best offer. Contact, Ron Slechta, The News, 419 B Avenue, Kalona, IA. 319-656-2273 or publisher@thenews-ia.com 02.16

FREE-2 ARTWAXERS AND A LABEL DISPENSER FOR MAILING. Must pay shipping or come and get them. Contact, Ron Slechta, The News, 419 B Avenue, Kalona, IA. 319-656-2273 or publisher@thenews-ia.com 02.16

FOR SALE: WESTERN IOWA WEEKLY NEWSPAPER NEAR SIOUX CITY. Legals for two counties, five schools and eight towns. Strong community support. Phone 712-870-9807

View and submit ads on the Internet at www.INAnews.com. Students and professionals may also submit their resumes for online viewing.

There is no charge for most of these ads. They are a free service to INA active (newspaper) members only. The name of the newspaper in the ad must be the same as published in the current INA Directory.

If you are trying to help an employee relocate, please send us the ad information on your letterhead, rather than having the employee write us. We will not run ads for persons living in a member's town without first clearing the ad with the publisher.

Please have copy to the INA office no later than noon on Monday. The INA will make the determination of whether an ad qualifies for free or paid publication. If payment for an ad is not enclosed with the ad, the INA will require payment in advance before the ad will be published.

Ads for products or services which could be marketed for a profit may be published for a fee of \$10 per insertion, paid in advance, with a 40-word maximum.

Recruitment (help wanted) ads for positions in states other than Iowa may be published for a fee of \$25 per insertion, with a 100-word maximum.

For more information, contact Cicely Gordon at cgordon@inaneews.com.



SUSTAINING MEMBERS

Armstrong Journal and sister newspapers Bancroft Register, Buena Vista County Journal, Estherville News, Emmetsburg Reporter-Democrat, Graettinger Times, Laurens Sun, Pocahontas Record-Democrat, Ringsted Dispatch, Ruthven Zipcode, Swea City Herald-Press, West Bend Journal
Axios Media Inc.
Business Record, Des Moines
Cedar Rapids Gazette
Cityview, Des Moines
CNHI LLC sister publications Ottumwa Courier, Clinton Herald, Oskaloosa Herald,
Des Moines Register
Barbara and Michael Gartner, Des Moines
International Union of Bricklayers & Allied Craftworkers,
Iowa Broadcasters Association
Iowa Laborers/Employers Cooperation & Education Trust
Iowa Newspaper Association
Iowa PBS
Iowa State Building & Construction Trades Council
KCCI-TV, Des Moines
KCRG-TV, Cedar Rapids
N'West Iowa REVIEW, Sheldon
Quad-City Times, Davenport
Sailor Enterprises, Des Moines
Sioux City Journal
Storm Lake Times Pilot
Sycamore Media Corp., Maquoketa, and its Maquoketa Sentinel Press, Bellevue Herald Leader, De Witt Observer, Wapello Republican, Van Buren County Register, New London Journal, Des Moines County News, Morning Sun News Herald, Clarion-Plainsman (Richland)
WHO-TV, Des Moines
Woodward Communications Inc., Dubuque Telegraph Herald, Dyersville Commercial, Cascade Pioneer, Manchester Press, Linn News (Central City), Anamosa Journal-Eureka, Mount Vernon-Lisbon Sun, Solon Economist

FIRST AMENDMENT MEMBERS

American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa
Ames Tribune
Associated Press, Iowa Bureau
Bleeding Heartland LLC, Des Moines
Burlington Hawk Eye
Carroll Times Herald
Community Media Group's Independence Bulletin-Journal, Waverly Newspapers, Oelwein Daily Register, Vinton Newspapers
Rob Davis, Urbandale
David E. Drake and Claire Cumbie-Drake, Des Moines
Drake University School of Journalism & Mass Communication
The Daily Iowan, Iowa City
David Elbert, Des Moines
Diane Graham, Des Moines
Greenlee School of Journalism and Communication, Iowa State University
Harlan News-Advertiser, Harlan Tribune
Carol A. Hunter, Des Moines
Indiana-Illinois-Iowa Foundation for Fair Contracting
Iowa Association for Justice
Iowa Broadcast News Association
Iowa Center for Public Affairs Journalism, IowaWatch.org
Iowa City Press-Citizen
Iowa High School Press Association
KWWL-TV, Waterloo
Rox Laird, Des Moines
Lee Enterprises Inc. sister publications Mason City Globe Gazette and Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier
Pen City Current, Fort Madison
RAYGUN LLC
University of Iowa School of Journalism & Mass Communication
Southeast Iowa Building & Construction Trades Council, Burlington.
Southeast Iowa Union and its affiliates, Mount Pleasant News, Washington Evening Journal, Fairfield Ledger
Brian Steffen, Ankeny
Times Citizen Communications Inc., Iowa Falls
Tri-City Building & Construction Trades Council, Rock Island, Ill.
David Yepsen, Des Moines

June 3, 2022

Michelle Morse, Superintendent
Bettendorf Community School District
3311 18th St.
Bettendorf, IA 52722

Rebecca Eastman, President
Bettendorf Board of Education
835 Hall St.
Bettendorf, IA 52722

VIA EMAIL AND U.S. POSTAL MAIL

mmorse@bettendorf.k12.ia.us
reastman@bettendorf.k12.ia.us

Dear Superintendent Morse and President Eastman:

We write to you today to express our profound disappointment with the decision last week by the Bettendorf Community School District to bar journalists from the meeting the district organized with parents, school administrators and members of the Bettendorf Board of Education.

The topic discussed on the evening of Wednesday, May 25, was one of the fundamental responsibilities of the Bettendorf Community School District — ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the district's 4,700 students during each school day. The importance of this obligation was driven home in tragic fashion the day before, when a gunman entered an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, and murdered 19 students and two teachers.

The gathering on May 25 at the Waterfront Center clearly falls within your obligation as the chief administrative officer of the school district and as the president of the Bettendorf Board of Education to comply with Iowa Code Chapter 21, commonly known as the open meetings law.

As journalists and as an advocate for open and accountable government, we ask that you:

(1) Immediately acknowledge in a public statement that the



Superintendent Morse and President Eastman

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gathering on May 25 violated both the letter of Chapter 21, as well as the spirit of the open meetings statute, and

(2) Provide assurances in a public statement that the school district will not engage in future violations of the open meetings law by ignoring the rights of the public and journalists to attend meetings, both formal and informal, of a majority of members of the Bettendorf Board of Education that do not fall within one of the justifications for closed sessions that are enumerated in Iowa Code section 21.5.

Barring both journalists and other interested people from the meeting on May 25 is a direct violation of the statute the Iowa Legislature clearly articulated in the first paragraph of the open meetings law. In unambiguous language, that statute says [with emphasis added]:

"This chapter seeks to assure, through a requirement of open meetings of governmental bodies, that the basis and rationale of governmental bodies, as well as those decisions themselves, are easily accessible to the people. Ambiguity in the construction or application of this chapter should be resolved in favor of openness."

Whether you choose to call last week's gathering a working session, a workshop, or a parents' meeting, the event very clearly was a public meeting under the legal definition of Chapter 21 of the Iowa Code. The relevant portion of the law, found in section 21.2 (2), states:

" 'Meeting' means a gathering in person or by electronic means, formal or informal, of a majority of the members of a governmental body where there is deliberation or action upon any matter within the scope of the governmental body's policy-making duties."

If you believe there was no "deliberation" at the gathering last week, I direct you to Black's Law Dictionary and its definition of "deliberation" — as the process of weighing, pondering, discussing, examining or consulting in order to form an opinion.

It would stretch believability to think that spending a couple of hours listening to the concerns of parents about the behavior of some Bettendorf Middle School students — including bullying and injuries suffered by students not otherwise involved in the incidents — does not fall within the meaning of deliberations on matters clearly within the scope of the Board of Education's policy-making duties.

It is inconceivable school leaders would assert that the gathering on May 25 was for "purely ministerial or social purposes when there is no discussion of policy or no intent to avoid the purposes of this chapter." (Section 21.2 (2))



Superintendent Morse and President Eastman
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However, if you and the district's attorneys believe there was a legal basis for keeping journalists from attending the May 25 meeting, please cite the specific section(s) of Iowa law on which you base this belief.

What we know to be true is this: Members of the Bettendorf community have been alarmed by the increasing frequency and nature of the student misconduct at Bettendorf Middle School. The authors of our Constitution and members of the Iowa Legislature who wrote the public meetings law more than 50 years ago recognized the important role journalists play in informing the public about the issues and problems, and potential solutions, being discussed by our governing bodies.

But journalists cannot do this important work if officials block journalists from having access to meetings like the one on May 25.

We look forward to hearing the school district's official response to the concerns we outline in this letter. We hope you better understand that the lack of transparency has harmed both the school district and the public and that officials now must reach out and assure the community the district has learned from last week's mistakes.

Respectfully,

Randy Evans, Executive Director
Iowa Freedom of Information Council
IowaFOICouncil@gmail.com

Alan Baker, News Director
WQAD-TV
alan.baker@wqad.com

Matt Christensen, Executive Editor
Quad-City Times
MChristensen@qctimes.com

Anne Hughes, News Director
KWQC-TV
ahughes@kwqc.com

Eric Olsen, News Director
WHBF-TV
eolsen@whbf.com

IN THE IOWA DISTRICT COURT FOR SCOTT COUNTY

[illegible]

The Iowa Freedom of Information Council (“the Council”) and other journalist-plaintiffs (collectively “Plaintiffs”) request that the Court review policies and practices utilized by the Bettendorf Community School District, the Bettendorf Community School Board (collectively “Bettendorf”), and individual school board members in the handling of a meeting that specifically excluded local journalists in violation of Iowa law.

Plaintiffs, for all of their causes of action against the Defendants, state:

PARTIES, VENUE, AND JURISDICTION

1. Plaintiff The Iowa Freedom of Information Council is a non-profit coalition of journalists, librarians, lawyers, educators, and other Iowans devoted to open government. The Council assists the Iowa Newspaper Association and the Iowa Broadcasters Association, whose

members regularly report on Iowa's public schools. The Council is incorporated in Iowa, with its home office located in Des Moines, Iowa.

2. The Council is an aggrieved party pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 21.6.

3. Plaintiff Lee Enterprises, Inc., d/b/a The Quad City Times is a media organization operating and doing business in Bettendorf, Iowa, with its headquarters in Davenport, Iowa.

4. The Quad City Times is an aggrieved party pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 21.6.

5. Plaintiff Gray Television Group, Inc., d/b/a KWQC Television, is a media organization operating and doing business in Bettendorf, Iowa with its headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia.

6. KWQC is an aggrieved party pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 21.6.

7. Plaintiff TEGNA Broadcast Holdings, LLC, d/b/a WQAD is a media organization operating and doing business in Bettendorf, Iowa with its headquarters in Tysons, Virginia.

8. WQAD is an aggrieved party pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 21.6.

9. Plaintiff Nexstar Media, Inc., d/b/a WHBF Television is a media organization operating and doing business in Bettendorf, Iowa with its headquarters in Irving, Texas.

10. WHBF Television is an aggrieved party pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 21.6.

11. Defendant Bettendorf Community School District ("the District") is an agency established to govern and run the schools of Bettendorf and is located in the City of Bettendorf, Scott County, Iowa.

12. Defendant Bettendorf Community School Board ("the Board") is a board that oversees, sets policy for, and makes decisions for the Bettendorf Community School District and is located in Bettendorf, Scott County, Iowa.

13. Defendants Rebecca Eastman, Andrew Champion, Paul Castro, Joanna Doerder, Richard Lynch, Michael Pyevich, and Linda Smithson are individual members of the Board.

14. Jurisdiction and venue are proper in this Court under Iowa Code § 22.6.

BACKGROUND AND FACTS

15. On May 25, 2022—one day after the tragic elementary school shooting in Uvalde, Texas—the District and the Board held a meeting with parents, school administrators, and members of the Bettendorf Board of Education to discuss student safety and bullying in Bettendorf schools.

16. On May 25, 2022, journalists and members of the news media arrived at the meeting to document the meeting for the public.

17. However, Bettendorf specifically and explicitly forbid any journalists from attending the meeting.

18. Bettendorf likewise specifically and explicitly forbid any recording or live streaming of the meeting.

19. Journalists and media institutions that were turned away from the meeting include, but are not limited to, local station KWQC-TV, local station WQAD, local station WHBF, and the Quad City Times.

20. On June 3, 2022, the Council sent a letter to the District and the Bettendorf Board of Education requesting acknowledgment that prohibiting members of the media from attending the May 25, 2022 meeting violated Iowa's Open Meetings Law and demanding that Bettendorf refrain from any further violations. *See* Attached Ex. 1.

21. As of the date of this filing, the Council has received no response to its June 3, 2022 letter.

COUNT I: VIOLATION OF CHAPTER 21 – INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

22. Plaintiffs re-allege and replead paragraphs one through 21.

23. Iowa’s Open Meetings Law “seeks to assure, through a requirement of open meetings or governmental bodies, that the basis and rationale of governmental decisions, as well as those decisions themselves, are easily accessible to the people.” Iowa Code § 21.1.

24. Defendants are governmental bodies and agents subject to the requirements of Iowa Code Chapter 21, Iowa’s Open Meetings Law.

25. The May 25, 2022 work session constitutes a meeting within the meaning of Iowa Code § 21.2(2).

26. Upon information and belief, the May 25, 2022 meeting was attended by a majority of the members of the Board.

27. Upon information and belief, the May 25, 2022 meeting included deliberation upon a matter within the scope of the District and the Board’s policy-making duties.

28. The May 25, 2022 meeting constituted a closed meeting prohibited by Iowa Code Chapter 21.

29. Bettendorf failed to provide requisite notice of the meeting.

30. Bettendorf’s explicit refusal to allow journalists to participate in the meeting evidences an intent to avoid the purposes of Chapter 21.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs respectfully request that the Court enter an order finding that Defendants violated Iowa Code Chapter 21 and:

i) assess each member of the Board who participated in violation of the Open Meetings

Law damages in an amount of not less than \$100 and not more than \$500, or, in the

- event that the member knowingly participated in such violation, assess that member damages in an amount of not less than \$1,000 and not more than \$2,500;
- ii) order the payment of costs and reasonable attorneys' fees incurred by Plaintiffs;
 - iii) issue a mandatory injunction punishable by civil contempt ordering the members of the Board to refrain from any future violations of Iowa's Open Meeting Law; and
 - iv) Order any other relief the Court deems just and necessary.

Respectfully submitted,

/s Samuel E. Jones

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ATTORNEYS FOR THE IOWA FREEDOM OF
INFORMATION COUNCIL



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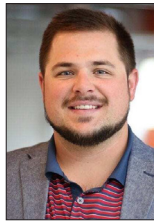
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This webinar, which will have a BASEBALL THEME, will go over how smaller publications and legacy print teams are getting started with digital sales to support their local clientele. AdCellerant will review different examples of publishers who are doing this now, the steps to get started, how to provide a consultative approach to your advertisers so they can expand their digital footprint, the revenue implications with these types of sales, and how you can leverage these now.

- What other small publications are doing with digital
- Steps to get started
- Giving a consultative approach with targeted display & local SEO
- How much money can we make with digital sales?

THE PRESENTERS...

Ben Bouslog & Ken Campbell



Ben Bouslog is the vice president of Business Development for AdCellerant, a tech-enabled marketing services company. AdCellerant partners with publishers to leverage their turn-key solutions to drive digital revenue streams. Ben's experience spans 8+ years in the digital space with a background in ad operations that gives him an intimate

familiarity with how digital really works and the value it can bring to any advertiser or media organization.

Ken Campbell is a Business Development Manager at AdCellerant. Ken is an experienced self-starter with 25 years experience in retail sales, direct marketing, print advertising, and B2B sales. A promotions and marketing expert, Ken grew a single automotive client into a multi-million-dollar direct mail firm before pivoting to the world of digital advertising. Over the years, Ken has worked with over a thousand different businesses - developing marketing plans both big and small - and acting as a trusted advisor to his clients.



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