



Iowa Newspaper Association Bulletin

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It was a week to celebrate accountability

RANDY EVANS

IOWA FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COUNCIL

Last week was one to savor. But it also was a week to reflect on how far we still need to travel to have true citizen engagement in our state and local governments.

First, some savoring.

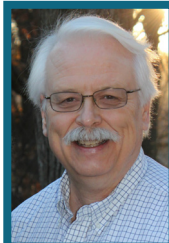
The Iowa League of Women Voters honored me and the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, the nonprofit, nonpartisan education and advocacy organization I lead. The annual Defending Democracy Award means so much — knowing it comes from the organizational descendants of the women who pushed for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving women the right to vote and who rallied in countless places across America, including right here in Bloomfield, to make that happen.

I mentioned to the League of Women Voters audience that among their right-to-vote ancestors was a friend of mine from my years as a newspaper editor in Albia. Ruth Hollingshead, a feisty feminist with a wonderful smile, was, in 1938, the first woman in Iowa to run for a seat in the U.S. House.

The morning after the award ceremony, the Iowa Supreme Court handed down a decision all Iowans should celebrate — that Iowa’s governor must provide public records when asked for copies.

The decision came in a lawsuit in which I and the Iowa FOI Council were plaintiffs, along with noted journalists Laura Belin and Clark Kauffman. Our lawsuit challenged Gov. Kim Reynolds’ refusal for up to 18 months during the Covid pandemic to fill requests for state records.

Reynolds’ attorneys contended the issues in the case were moot because she turned over the requested documents within days after the lawsuit was filed. She also contended that allowing the lawsuit to move



Randy Evans

forward would infringe on a governor’s executive privilege.

There was much more at stake in this case than merely a legal dispute with the governor over access to documents. The Supreme Court’s unanimous decision in favor of the plaintiffs was an important message to all officials throughout state and local governments that unlimited delays in responding to such requests are not acceptable.

This was an important conclusion, because many government officials take cues from the governor on transparency and accountability matters.

And the outcome was especially noteworthy because the Supreme Court’s decision quoted a 10-year-old Drake University Law Review article — one written by Brenna Findley, now Brenna Bird. She was Gov. Terry Branstad’s legal adviser at the time. She now is Iowa’s attorney general.

The Supreme Court concluded that allowing unlimited delays in filling records requests would hamper the free and open examination of public records. Citing the Drake article, the court wrote, “Providing information quickly and efficiently demystifies government.”

Bird’s article quoted Yale University law professor J.M. Balkin, whose comments the Iowa FOI Council echoes: “Only an informed public can perform its role in a constitutional framework: holding government accountable. Transparency of government functions and process is essential. A lack of transparency makes it difficult for citizens to hold their government accountable.”

Access to letters, emails, memos and other documents written by or to government employees and officials is important if the public is going to be able to effectively evaluate the on-the-job performance of the governor, mayor, city manager, school superintendent or any of the people elected to serve on councils and boards.

Last week, before the League of Women Voters

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CALENDAR of EVENTS

MEETINGS

INA, INF, INA Services
Company Board Meetings
July 21, 2023

WEBINARS

How to Report on
Addiction
May 11, 2023

Selling Advertising Amidst
Economic Uncertainty
May 18, 2023

meeting minutes

Iowa Newspaper Association | Board of Directors April 21, 2023

The INA Board met at the Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library at 10:00 a.m. with the following members present Brad Hicks, Algona – Kossuth County Advance; Zack Kucharski, Cedar Rapids Gazette; Debbie Anselm, Davenport Quad-City Times; Bob Woodward, Dubuque Telegraph Herald; Terry Christensen, Fort Dodge Messenger; Jason Brummond, Iowa City Daily Iowan; Trevis Mayfield, Maquoketa Sentinel-Press; Jeff Wagner, Sheldon N'West Iowa REVIEW and Sue Smith, Winterset Madisonian. Also present were Kris Maggard, INA Services Co; Jana Shepherd, INF; and Susan Patterson Plank, INA.

Votes taken:

- A. On a motion by Brummond, seconded by Hicks, the minutes of the February 1, 2023 board meeting and the February 1, 2023 annual meeting were approved.
- B. On a motion by Wagner, seconded by Woodward, the INA membership dues for 2024 were approved.
- C. On a motion by Kucharski, seconded by Smith, the board approved the recommendation from the INA Membership committee to accept Ted Gorman as a Friend of Iowa Newspapers member.

Action agreed upon:

- A. The board agreed that its next board meeting would be July 21, 2023.

Other items discussed:

- A. The board heard a presentation on the 2021 audit from Kathy French of Ryun, Givens & Company.
- B. The board heard an update from Patterson Plank on the organization, including its financials. Patterson Plank reminded those board members serving on the strategic planning committee to hold July 20, 2023, for a full-day planning session. All board members are invited to attend dinner that evening.
- C. The board heard an update from Patterson Plank on the current status of the legislative session with an emphasis on Senate File 546.
- D. Patterson Plank shared a letter of resignation from the INA board from Matt Grohe, Mid-America Publishing Corporation.
- E. The board received a board attendance report.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Patterson Plank

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WEBINAR SPOTLIGHT

Visit www.onlinemediacampus.com to register today!



How to Report on Addiction

MAY 11 FROM 1-2 P.M.

IN THIS WEBINAR...

Addiction is a complicated disease that affects every community in America. In their work to cover this complex issue, members of the press can inadvertently perpetuate problematic narratives about drug use and addiction that can increase stigma and discrimination towards people with active addiction, in treatment, or in recovery.

In this hour-long training, Reporting on Addiction will help reporters and editors build their knowledge of the science of addiction, its medical definition and how the brain disease works. Then, we take a deeper look at how addiction stigma manifests in news publications, and translate the science into tips for better reporting – from pitch to publication – that you can use today.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER...

Jonathan JK Stoltman is co-director of Reporting on Addiction and Director of the Opioid Policy Institute. In 2019, he completed his PhD in Lifespan Developmental Psychology from West Virginia University and has worked as a researcher focusing on opioid addiction treatment for the past decade. Jonathan's academic work has appeared in leading journals and at national conferences. Their current work focuses on addiction



stigma, the media, and digital approaches to addiction treatment.

Ashton Marra is the co-director of Reporting on Addiction and the executive editor of its founding partner 100 Days in Appalachia, a 2021 national Edward R. Murrow award-winning nonprofit digital publication. There, she oversees the work of a team of editors, contributors and reporters across Appalachia to create content by Appalachians for Appalachians. Ashton is also a teaching assistant professor in the West Virginia University Reed College of Media, where she teaches news writing, video storytelling and community-focused journalism. She's spent more than a decade working as a professional journalist for both public media and commercial news outlets, on local, statewide and national platforms, including NPR and ABC News.

Selling Advertising Amidst Economic Uncertainty

MAY 18 FROM 1-2 P.M.

IN THIS WEBINAR...

The fear of economic uncertainty makes advertisers run for the hills. Add to that the fact that most advertisers are just barely recovering from the pandemic and you have a recipe for canceled contracts and ad sales rep frustration. Multi-million dollar media sales coach Ryan Dohrn shares highlights from his book *Selling Forward*. Proven methods to sell to emotionally drained, financially fatigued, Zoomed out advertisers in an ever-changing world of political and economic uncertainty!

ABOUT THE PRESENTER...

Ryan Dohrn is a top motivational speaker that won an Emmy for marketing excellence while working for ABC TV/Walt Disney Co. and was recognized by Forbes.com with the "Best of the Web" award for his business strategies. Dohrn's focus is leadership training and



team performance development. His passion for sales and marketing has given him the unique opportunity to touch half a billion dollars in revenue for companies in seven countries. Dohrn was one of the youngest managers in Walt Disney history. His management insights have been featured in USA Today and on CNN. Ryan is an internationally certified business coach, has trained over 30,000 professionals, and works monthly with companies in 15 business sectors.

FREE MEMBER EXCHANGE

▼ HELP WANTED

SENIOR STAFF WRITER. Business Publications Corporation (BPC), an award-winning media and communications company, is seeking a full-time journalist to cover business news in Greater Des Moines for the Business Record, our flagship division. The right candidate will join our experienced staff to lead the Business Record's coverage of the people, issues and trends affecting the business community as the region continues to grow and transform. This reporter's primary focuses will include real estate, development and local government; the role will also encompass producing a variety of business stories.

The position requires a strong writer who can develop a beat and write in-depth analysis pieces on a variety of business topics for our weekly print edition, website, e-newsletters and specialty magazines. This person must function with a great deal of autonomy, building sources on their beats and managing their story schedules.

This person is also given freedom to generate a majority of their own story ideas. The ideal candidate must also be able to report and write daily business news items quickly and efficiently for our website and be able to keep a daily pulse on the community.

Previous business writing experience is a plus; however, it is not a requirement. The candidate must have a solid foundation in AP style, the principles of journalism and have a desire to represent the Business Record at a large number of community events and network with the community both in person, virtually and via social media. In addition, this person must have comfort leading panel discussions in front of an audience.

Basic photography skills, video production experience and the ability to help our organization move forward in the digital world are major pluses, but not required.

Management experience, project management and editing skills are not required, but the role has the flexibility to be adapted to utilize skills of this nature.

A passion for the Des Moines and Iowa, and a desire to tell the story of our communities is a priority.

Visit <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/Details/1287240> to apply. Please include a cover letter with your resume.

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER. The Indianola Independent Advocate and Record-Herald, an independent, Iowa-owned digital plus print newspaper, is seeking help managing our Town News, Audience Plus subscription environment. The job will be a flexible, part-time, remote position setting up subscriptions and rates in the Town News offer-builder environment on an occasional basis and helping troubleshoot user issues when needed. Happy to work through a newspaper that uses this service and is willing to make its team available or an individual who works in this environment and would like to earn some extra income outside of regular work hours. Call 515-250-3698 or email amy@indianola-ia.com to discuss options. 0101

▼ FOR SALE

FOR SALE: Must go by May 1 - either to you or the scrapper. Two ERCM NewsMatic Mako CTP units, each with its own Glunz & Jensen in-line processor. Both used through November 2022, and continually maintained since. Approximately 4,800 ECO LCV 28 x 23.0626 x .008 Southern Litho plates. Plate punch and plate bender. Price: \$9,600 and you haul it all away. Also, Goss Community roll carts and spacers - make an offer. Call the Spencer Daily Reporter at 712-262-6610 or Brad at 641-430-1023.

WANTED: Old Apple Laser Writer printer. Laser Writer 16/600 or Laser Writer Pro, working or parts. Call the Don at the Avoca Journal Herald 402-681-4763.

View and submit ads on the Internet at www.INAnews.com. Students and professionals may also submit their resumés 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@inanews.com.

The INA needs your help!

Work has begun on a comprehensive history of the Iowa Newspaper Association and its predecessor organizations. We need your help!

We ask all INA members to search their archives and file cabinets for photographs that might be considered for this publication.

EXAMPLES OF PHOTOS WE SEEK:

- Longtime owners, publishers and editors.
- Recipients of major awards, from Distinguished Service to Master Editor/Publisher to the Pulitzer.
- Award presentations or candid moments from conventions and other press association events.
- Memorabilia or souvenirs from early association events, including award plaques and covers of convention or banquet programs.

Photos from any period are welcome, but we particularly need images preceding the 1990s.

Digital images (TIF preferred, or JPG) may be emailed to brian.cooper@crestwoodpublishing.com. Please include identifications and description, name of photographer (if known) and name of the person and newspaper granting permission to publish.

More questions? Contact Brian Cooper, retired editor of the Dubuque Telegraph Herald, at the email address above.

ACCOUNTABILITY - cont. from page 1

event or the Supreme Court decision, I talked with groups of citizens from southeast Iowa and northwest Iowa who were angered by decisions their local school boards had made with precious little public involvement.

In Fort Madison, these parents and grandparents were frustrated that the school board had decided to stop a longstanding practice of allowing students from the local parochial schools to participate on Fort Madison High School sports teams. The decision was reached without the matter being discussed at a school board meeting and without a formal, on-the-record vote by board members.

Parents in the Cherokee School District have been frustrated by fees of more than \$500 for copies of some records pertaining to the recent decision by the school board to allow an undisclosed number of teachers and other employees to be armed with guns at the three local schools.

Parents' frustration climbed when they were told the makeup of the committee that will manage the program is confidential and when their questions have gone unanswered about the costs of the gun program, including training time, liability insurance premiums and costs for weapons and ammunition.

Officials in Fort Madison, Cherokee and dozens of other communities where citizens are being turned back from seeking information, either directly or in subtle ways, ought to read Brenna Bird's 2013 Drake Law Review article. Here are some highlights to digest:

"Transparency guards against an arbitrary and capricious element in bureaucratic decision making," Bird wrote. "... I believe transparency serves as a check against poor decision making and behavior that is not worthy of the call of public service. Each time poor decisions, processes, or behaviors are brought to light, it serves as a reminder of the importance of good work in the service of the public."

Bird continued, "Embracing transparency has several benefits for the political system as well as office holders. The bureaucracy is more accountable when it knows that its processes and dealings may see the light of day."

"Transparency is a valuable good that both parties can embrace. There is nothing inherently Republican or Democratic about transparency. ... When independent voters go to the polls I believe they see pro-transparency leaders in a positive light."

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