

Monroe A. Miller Jr.
19 Big Spruce Lane
Waynesville, NC 28786
November 22, 2014

Subject: Open Letter to Jonathan Key, Mountaineer and Greg Boothroyd, Smoky Mountain News.

The following is an open letter to Jonathan Key, owner of the Mountaineer, and Greg Boothroyd, owner of the Smoky Mountain News, after some particularly offensive Hit Pieces by Vicki Hyatt and Becky Johnson, reporters respectively for each newspaper, regarding the newly elected Tax Collect, Mike Mathews.

Becky Johnson felt a need to chime in, so a brief dialog with Becky Johnson is included.

Enjoy...

Monroe A. Miller Jr.
Haywood County Taxpayer.

Subject: Keeping the Mountaineer and SMN afloat.
Date: Sun, 16 Nov 2014 18:40:58 -0500
From: Monroe Miller
To: Jonathan Key <jkey@themountaineer.com>, Greg Boothroyd <ads@smokymountainnews.com>, Vicki Hyatt <vhyatt@themountaineer.com>, Becky Johnson <becky@smokymountainnews.com>, Jessi Stone <jstone@themountaineer.com>
CC: Phillip Wight, Jonnie Cure <jcubed41@gmail.com>, Eddie Cabe, Lisa Womack, Mark Swanger <markswanger@bellsouth.net>, KIRK KIRKPATRICK <kirk@jwklaw.net>, Michael Sorrells <sorrells@cbvnol.com>, Bill Upton <billupton@bellsouth.net>, KEVIN ENSLEY <lakensley@bellsouth.net>, Leon Killian <chip.killian@nelsonmullins.com>, Chip Killian <CKillian@haywoodnc.net>, Ira Dove <idove@haywoodnc.net>, Julie Davis <jhdavis@haywoodnc.net>, Michele Presnell <PresnellLA@ncLeg.net>, Denny King, Mike Mathews Pete Kaliner <PeterKaliner@clearchannel.com>, Windy McKinney

You know, Mr. Key and Mr. Boothroyd,

After those hit pieces on Mike Mathews (let me review for you) -

<http://www.smokymountainnews.com/news/item/14631-new-tax-collector-had-to-have-wages-garnished>

<http://www.smokymountainnews.com/news/item/14630-upset-election-for-tax-collector-prompts-job-reshuffling>

<http://themountaineer.villagesoup.com/p/mike-matthews-prepares-to-assume-tax-collector-duties/1269691>

<http://themountaineer.villagesoup.com/p/mike-matthews-time-as-alderman/1268694>

You know what I would do if I were Mike Mathews?

I would pull the plug on any and all advertising I would be doing placing public notices as soon as I took the oath to become Haywood County Tax Collector so that neither of these rags would get another penny. Do you know how much Francis has given to you over the years? That could all stop, and you would have to start worrying about going out of business. I would sit down and figure out how I could put all those notices on the county web site, www.haywoodnc.net instead or any other alternative.

Should be a wing-ding of a county commission meeting tomorrow afternoon. I hope you can all attend. I understand WLOS may be there to cover it.

And, God help us all, Terry Ramey may give a public comment.

Monroe Miller

Subject: Re: Keeping the Mountaineer and SMN afloat.
Date: Sun, 16 Nov 2014 19:16:13 -0500
From: Becky Johnson <becky@smokymountainnews.com>
To: Monroe Miller, Jonathan Key <jkey@themountaineer.com>, Greg Boothroyd
<ads@smokymountainnews.com>, Vicki Hyatt <vhyatt@themountaineer.com>, Jessi
Stone <jstone@themountaineer.com>
CC: Phillip Wight, Jonnie Cure <jcubed41@gmail.com>, Eddie Cabe, Lisa Womack, mark
swanger <markswanger@bellsouth.net>, kirk kirkpatrick <kirk@jwklaw.net>, Michael
Sorrells <sorrells@cbvnol.com>, Bill Upton <billupton@bellsouth.net>, kevin
ensley <lakensley@bellsouth.net>, chip killian <chip.killian@nelsonmullins.com>,
Chip Killian <CKillian@haywoodnc.net>, Ira Dove <IDove@haywoodnc.net>, Julie
Davis <jhdavis@haywoodnc.net>, Michele Presnell <PresnellLA@ncLeg.net>, Denny
King, Mike Mathews, Pete Kaliner <PeterKaliner@clearchannel.com>, Windy McKinney

Monroe,

Are you suggesting we censure the news in exchange for getting or keeping advertising dollars?

That would be unethical. As journalists, it is our job to report on the conduct of elected public officials and share relevant public information about elected officials.

It seems you are suggesting Mike Matthews use public tax dollars as a carrot at best – and a bribe at worst – to get the media to censure what it reports. That would not only be unethical, but illegal, for a public elected official to use public tax dollars as a tool of bribery to get the media to report or not report the truth.

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Becky Johnson, reporter
Smoky Mountain News
828-507-9141 (cell)
828-452-4251 (office)

Subject: Re: Keeping the Mountaineer and SMN afloat.
Date Sun, 16 Nov 2014 19:30:17 -0500
From Monroe Miller
To: Becky Johnson <becky@smokymountainnews.com>, Jonathan Key <jkey@themountaineer.com>, Greg Boothroyd <ads@smokymountainnews.com>, Vicki Hyatt <vhyatt@themountaineer.com>, Jessi Stone <jstone@themountaineer.com>
CC: Phillip Wight, Jonnie Cure <jcubed41@gmail.com>, Eddie Cabe, Lisa Womack, mark swanger <markswanger@bellsouth.net>, kirk kirkpatrick <kirk@jwklaw.net>, Michael Sorrells <sorrells@cbvnol.com>, Bill Upton <billupton@bellsouth.net>, kevin ensley <lakensley@bellsouth.net>, chip killian <chip.killian@nelsonmullins.com>, Chip Killian <CKillian@haywoodnc.net>, Ira Dove <IDove@haywoodnc.net>, Julie Davis <jhdavis@haywoodnc.net>, Michele Presnell <PresnellLA@ncLeg.net>, Denny King, Mike Mathews, Pete Kaliner <PeterKaliner@clearchannel.com>, Windy McKinney

Ms. Johnson,

If it is your job to report on the conduct of elected public officials and share relevant public information about elected officials, why don't you start off with the following?

[Incident Report - Simple Assault by perpetrator David Francis, Haywood County Tax Collector on August 6, 2012. 11/09/2014...](#)

or

<http://haywoodtp.net/pubII/141109FrancisAssault.pdf>

If you read closely, I never suggested that Mike Mathews use public tax dollars as a carrot. I suggested what I would do if I were Mike Mathews.

Looking forward to seeing the Assault perpetrated by David Francis on me in your next edition.

Monroe Miller

Subject: Re: Keeping the Mountaineer and SMN afloat.
Date: Sun, 16 Nov 2014 23:05:39 -0500
From: Becky Johnson <becky@smokymountainnews.com>
To: Monroe Miller, Jonathan Key <jkey@themountaineer.com>, Greg Boothroyd <ads@smokymountainnews.com>, Vicki Hyatt <vhyatt@themountaineer.com>, Jessi Stone <jstone@themountaineer.com>
CC: Phillip Wight, Jonnie Cure <jcubed41@gmail.com>, Eddie Cabe Lisa Womack, mark swanger <markswanger@bellsouth.net>, kirk kirkpatrick <kirk@jwklaw.net>, Michael Sorrells <sorrells@cbvnol.com>, Bill Upton <billupton@bellsouth.net>, kevin ensley <lakensley@bellsouth.net>, chip killian <chip.killian@nelsonmullins.com>, Chip Killian <CKillian@haywoodnc.net>, Ira Dove <IDove@haywoodnc.net>, Julie Davis <jhdavis@haywoodnc.net>, Michele Presnell <PresnellLA@ncLeg.net>, Denny King, Mike Mathews, Pete Kaliner <PeterKaliner@clearchannel.com>, Windy McKinney

Actually, I was unaware of it until just now.

To recap for your cc'ed audience: you complained to law enforcement that your elbow was bumped in the hall by David Francis as he was passing you, and you felt it was intentional. Yet law enforcement saw the complaint as unsubstantiated. And the courthouse video was unclear whether you and he bumped or not. So charges weren't pressed. I am wondering how we would approach this in the newspaper.

People at odds will occasionally make unsubstantiated complaints to law enforcement to try to get the other person in trouble, so we have to be cautious when reporting on an allegation that was merely that, an allegation, and didn't actually rise to the level of charges. I am not suggesting that's what did or didn't happen in your case. I am just describing, in theory, the conundrum of unsubstantiated allegations. It would be an interesting question for a journalism class to discuss.

--
Becky Johnson, reporter
Smoky Mountain News
828-507-9141 (cell)
828-452-4251 (office)

Subject: Re: Keeping the Mountaineer and SMN afloat.

Date: Sun, 16 Nov 2014 20:21:23 -0500

From: Monroe Miller

To: Becky Johnson <becky@smokymountainnews.com>, Jonathan Key <jkey@themountaineer.com>, Greg Boothroyd <ads@smokymountainnews.com>, Vicki Hyatt <vhyatt@themountaineer.com>, Jessi Stone <jstone@themountaineer.com>
CC: Phillip Wight, Jonnie Cure <jcubed41@gmail.com>, Eddie Cabe, Lisa Womack, mark swanger <markswanger@bellsouth.net>, kirk kirkpatrick <kirk@jwklaw.net>, Michael Sorrells <sorrells@cbvnol.com>, Bill Upton <billupton@bellsouth.net>, kevin ensley <lkensley@bellsouth.net>, chip killian <chip.killian@nelsonmullins.com>, Chip Killian <CKillian@haywoodnc.net>, Ira Dove <IDove@haywoodnc.net>, Julie Davis <jhdavis@haywoodnc.net>, Michele Presnell <PresnellLA@ncLeg.net>, Denny King, Mike Mathews, Pete Kaliner <PeterKaliner@clearchannel.com>, Windy McKinney

Ms. Johnson,

Yeah, I didn't think there was a ghost of a chance that Incident Report - Simple Assault by perpetrator David Francis, Haywood County Tax Collector on August 6, 2012. 11/09/2014... would appear in the Smoky Mountain News. So much for journalistic ethics.

Monroe Miller

Subject: Re: Keeping the Mountaineer and SMN afloat.

Date: Mon, 17 Nov 2014 09:07:07 -0500

From: Monroe Miller

To: Becky Johnson <becky@smokymountainnews.com>, Jonathan Key <jkey@themountaineer.com>, Greg Boothroyd <ads@smokymountainnews.com>, Vicki Hyatt <vhyatt@themountaineer.com>, Jessi Stone <jstone@themountaineer.com>
CC: Phillip Wight, Jonnie Cure <jcubed41@gmail.com>, Eddie Cabe, Lisa Womack, mark swanger <markswanger@bellsouth.net>, kirk kirkpatrick <kirk@jwklaw.net>, Michael Sorrells <sorrells@cbvnol.com>, Bill Upton <billupton@bellsouth.net>, kevin ensley <lkensley@bellsouth.net>, chip killian <chip.killian@nelsonmullins.com>, Chip Killian <CKillian@haywoodnc.net>, Ira Dove <IDove@haywoodnc.net>, Julie Davis <jhdavis@haywoodnc.net>, Michele Presnell <PresnellLA@ncLeg.net>, Denny King, Mike Mathews, Pete Kaliner <PeterKaliner@clearchannel.com>, Windy McKinney, Greg Christopher <gchristopher@haywoodnc.net>, Bill Hollingsed <wpdchief@waynesvillepd.com>

So, Ms. Johnson,

To summarize your recap -

1. If you are writing about a democrat (i.e. David Francis, Mark Swanger, etc.), they get a pass;
2. If you are writing about a Republican, you -
 - a. Do your best with a character assassination hit piece;
 - b. Steer the reader to the concept that some people make unsubstantiated complaints (you know me better than that);
 - c. Let's toss this over to some journalism class to discuss and debate it.

Note that I have added to additional people to this cc list.

Monroe Miller

Subject: Re: Keeping the Mountaineer and SMN afloat.
Date: Mon, 17 Nov 2014 11:20:39 -0500
From: Becky Johnson <becky@smokymountainnews.com>
To: Monroe Miller, Jonathan Key <jkey@themountaineer.com>, Greg Boothroyd <ads@smokymountainnews.com>, Vicki Hyatt <vhyatt@themountaineer.com>, Jessi Stone <jstone@themountaineer.com>
CC: Phillip Wight, Jonnie Cure <jcubed41@gmail.com>, Eddie Cabe Lisa Womack, mark swanger <markswanger@bellsouth.net>, kirk kirkpatrick <kirk@jwklaw.net>, Michael Sorrells <sorrells@cbvnl.com>, Bill Upton <billupton@bellsouth.net>, kevin ensley <lakensley@bellsouth.net>, chip killian <chip.killian@nelsonmullins.com>, Chip Killian <CKillian@haywoodnc.net>, Ira Dove <IDove@haywoodnc.net>, Julie Davis <jhdavis@haywoodnc.net>, Michele Presnell <PresnellLA@ncLeg.net>, Denny King, Mike Mathews, Pete Kaliner <PeterKaliner@clearchannel.com>, Windy McKinney, Greg Christopher <gchristopher@haywoodnc.net>, "wpdchief@waynesvillepd.com" <wpdchief@waynesvillepd.com>

Monroe,

I will summarize in my own words rather than yours:

- Someone bumping your elbow in the hallway and you filing an assault complain against that person, but no charges being pressed = not news.
- The elected tax collector having a history of not paying his own taxes = news.

You are alleging some kind of party-bias, but an alien could drop in from outerspace and realize why the first one is not news but the second one is, regardless of party.

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Becky Johnson, reporter
Smoky Mountain News
828-507-9141 (cell)
828-452-4251 (office)