

Taylor Newspapers

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Feb. 8, 2017

Dear Kristey Williams, Chairman
House Local Government Committee

Re: Opposition to HB 2247

Dear committee members:

Our family is five generations deep in the Kansas newspaper business, dating back to post-Civil War days.

A constant during those decades has been the legal notices that make official many local ordinances, resolutions, budgets and other reports.

Legal publications are not associated with our news coverage or editorial stands. They are printed precisely, proofread with care and handled professionally. Attorneys, city and county officials and state agencies utilize our black-and-white space to let the public know about actions regarding taxation, budgets, lawsuits, election candidacies and more.

In addition to my duties as a publisher for 47 years, I also served eight years as a county commissioner in Montgomery County. From that vantage point, I also held an appreciation for the legal notices that were printed in various newspapers in our county.

Admittedly, many elected city and council officials consider such printed notices to be dead costs, and that attitude always alarms me. Our Delinquent Real Estate List that runs each August costs around \$15,000 to publish and distribute. While county treasurers would like to avoid this cost, this list is a money maker for our county, usually bringing in \$80,000 to \$100,000 in additional revenues.

Two years ago, my co-publisher wife and I noticed a major error in a City Treasurer's Report for the City of Caney. When we took the issue to our mayor and city council, we were able to provide copies of these reports dating back to 1994, noting the same error for over 16 years.

Because of that printed notice, the City of Caney called for an outside audit, then went to work updating the accounting standards at City Hall, and today the books are balanced again.

Such official notices definitely contain what some would say is boring information. But this one suddenly became of interest to our governing body,

the citizens of Caney, the county attorney and even the Kansas Attorney General.

Even this week, a city clerk called our office to see if we still had copies of Quarterly City Treasurer's Reports from 2015. An auditor needed them, and she could not find hers.

Within 15 minutes, we looked in our bound newspaper files, found the publications, made copies, made new Affidavits of Publication, and hand-carried them to City Hall.

As I walked away from the clerk's office, she made an interesting comment: "We're supposed to put these things on our city website, but nobody knows how to do that."

When I see proposals to post such notices on local municipal websites, all I can think about are the local sites which I check often and find them largely inaccurate and seldom kept up to date.

Our newspaper(s) embrace the internet and social media. We post all legal publications on a statewide newspaper archive which attorneys and others use for reference. We are professional handlers of information, while most municipal websites are managed by someone with basic technical skills rather than precision in proofreading, absolute assurance that such notices are published on specific dates and a record of archiving black-and-white newspaper pages that, in our case, date back to the 1870s.

Newspapers also provide any number of proof-of-publication affidavits to all required entities on a timely basis. This is important to court proceedings and date-of-effectiveness for certain laws and ordinances. Nothing like that could happen when posting to a faceless internet site.

By the way, there are hundreds of millions of internet sites, but only one local newspaper in a community.

On a small-business level, our newspaper family makes a portion of our living printing legal publications. At least one of our newspapers, the Prairie Star, that serves Elk and Chautauqua counties, would close if it were not the official distributor of official information.

Thank you for considering my views on H.B. 2247. We urge its defeat.

Sincerely,



Rudy Taylor, publisher

The Montgomery County Chronicle

The Prairie Star (Elk and Chautauqua Counties)

The Labette Avenue