

UNAPPROVED CHESTERFIELD NEWSLETTER 3

July 01, 2012

By John Hoffmann

CHESTERFIELD LEADERS TAKE TIME AWAY FROM JOBS TO ATTACK PATCH.COM COVERAGE AND EDITORIAL OPIONIONS Chesterfield government staffers and elected leaders upset with coverage they had been receiving on Patch.com began sending emails trying to find out who on the national level was over local editor Jean Whitney and columnist John Hoffmann (me!).

The city leaders and staffers who at meetings and public hearings seemed to be vocal cheerleaders for obtaining Community Improvement District sales taxes that would go to one outlet mall developer's construction and long term maintenance costs over a 20-year period, were upset with Patch. Since at least last April there have been emails about the Patch.com coverage of city government.

Journalistically it was hard for any reporter to ignore crowded council chambers with people upset over wealthy developers wanting to build shopping centers for expensive brands in an affluent area while getting a special tax to help pay for their cost and increase their profits. This opposition included a lengthy letter from a former mayor deploring what the city council was about to do. Hard to ignore but apparently city leaders thought ignored it should be.

In April city leaders began trying to find out who the editor and columnist's bosses were. They wanted meetings and claimed that after launching in November of 2010 Patch.com wanted to be "partners" with the city and now Patch was actually reporting or as one official called it "tattle tailing."

It appeared as if elected officials and staffers wanted to stop reporting that covered both sides of city issues and opinion writing that poked fun at politicians and local issues.

As someone who was trying to provide interesting and at times amusing opinion columns I was directly affected by this effort. The regional Patch.com editor Kurt Greenbaum, who had a serious brush with journalistic ethics while working at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, apparently tried to appease the city leaders and he pulled three of my columns.

I rewrote one of the pulled columns and it was run by editor Jean Whitney without Greenbaum's knowledge.

A second column was resubmitted to Whitney, which she posted. It dealt with a tongue-in-cheek review of cars owned by local politicians from Senator Claire McCaskill to city councilpersons. This humor piece drew the wrath of the city administrator and several city councilpersons. One morning started with an elected official upset with a Patch.com column writing the city administrator asking for advice on what to do.

The one thing that was clear at Patch.com was once Jean Whitney, an experienced newspaper woman, took over the Chesterfieldpatch.com site from a recent college graduate the reporting changed and I was submitting more opinion columns on local issues. In six months, readership was dramatically up as much as 50%.

To try and get a handle on this opposition to the coverage at the city level, I filed a Missouri Sunshine Law records request with the city for emails reference complaints and the need for meetings concerning the coverage they have been getting.

Here are some of those emails. (If you would like the entire response which includes many duplicate emails please email me and I'll forward it along.)

The first email we located was on April 10 from Chesterfield Assistant City Administrator Libby Malberg-Tucker to the national Patch.com office, followed by a boiler plate reply.

APRIL 2012

Ltucker, Apr 10 09:25 am (EDT):

I would like to know who our local Chesterfield Patch Editor, Jean Whitney, reports to within your organization and would like their contact information as well. Thank you.

Melanie, Apr 10 12:41 pm (EDT):

Hi there,

Thank you for your email! I am routing this ticket to the Editorial team for further assistance. A member of that team will follow up with you shortly.

Best regards,

Patch Support

MAY

Almost a month later Malberg-Tucker was still contacting Patch in New York wanting to know who oversees Chesterfield editor Jean Whitney and any writers. Malberg-Tucker

makes it clear that she is writing for her boss. Her boss is city administrator Mike Herring.

Ltucker, May 03 10:35 am (EDT):

Satta:

My boss wants to know to whom the reporters covering our City report and who exercises editorial/content review over the stories that they write. We would like both the e-mail address and telephone number for those individuals. Thank you.

Libbey Malberg-Tucker, CEcD
Assistant City Administrator for
Community Services & Economic Development
City of Chesterfield
690 Chesterfield Parkway West
Chesterfield, MO 63017
ltucker@chesterfield.mo.us
636-537-6721

From: Satta Sarmah [mailto:notifications-support@patch.zendesk.com]
Sent: Wednesday, April 11, 2012 12:56 PM
To: Libbey Tucker
Subject: [Patch Support] Re: Regional Supervisory Contact

Next Greenbaum responds to Herring on May 8 and Herring in turns writes back on the same day.

From: Kurt Greenbaum [mailto:kurt.greenbaum@patch.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 08, 2012 11:32 AM
To: Libbey Tucker
Cc: Jean Whitney
Subject: Chesterfield Patch editor

Ms. Malberg-Tucker:

Your note below has come to my attention. The editor of Chesterfield Patch is Jean Whitney, who is cc'ed this reply. Her contact information is readily available on the Chesterfield Patch site here:

<http://chesterfield.patch.com/users/jean-whitney-2>

I am the regional editor in St. Louis, overseeing all the sites in the area. My contact information is below.

Herring responded later on May 8 indicated he is writing on behalf of several elected officials. Clearly they are unhappy with the coverage.

On Tue, May 8, 2012 at 2:23 PM, Michael Herring <mherring@chesterfield.mo.us> wrote:

Mr. Greenbaum: Thanks for your response. Both Jean Whitney and John Hoffman routinely cover Chesterfield City Council meetings and both of them, over the past several months, attend the same meetings. While Ms. Whitney is,

technically, the Chesterfield Patch "editor", she is, from our perspective, primarily a reporter. It was my question to Ms. Tucker that prompted her original e-mail, as we were trying to determine for whom Ms. Whitney works and/or who supervises/edits her work. Now that we have determined that person to be you, Mayor Geiger and I (possibly others) would very much like to schedule a PRIVATE meeting with you, to discuss a variety of issues/concerns regarding Patch. **CONFIDENTIALLY**, the concerns expressed to me by some of our elected officials and/or others who are actively involved in our community, involve Ms. Whitney. If, after we meet, you would like us to meet subsequently with you AND Ms. Whitney, we would certainly be willing to do so. Please advise. Thank you, in advance, for your time and consideration.

Michael G. Herring, ICMA-CM

City Administrator

Mayor Geiger is also clearly concerned with the coverage and is in the loop with those wanting to do something about it from this May 9 email between Herring and Geiger about setting up a meeting with elected officials and Greenbaum.

----- Original message -----

Subject: Meeting re: Chesterfield Patch
From: Michael Herring <mherring@chesterfield.mo.us>
To: Bruce Geiger <BGeiger@chesterfield.mo.us>
CC:

Bruce: FYI, see below.....Mr. Greenbaum, the managing editor for Patch who "supervises" Jean W., is available after NOON today, or after 2:30pm tomorrow or Friday. Your calendar appears to be OPEN, after lunch today and/or after 2:30pm on Friday. You have a 2pm meeting tomorrow, but could probably be available around 3:30pm, prior to the P/PW Committee meeting. That might be best for both you and Connie.....do you have a preference? I will try to have him come to City Hall, but I won't know until I call him back, if that will be possible. So, please let me know ASAP. Once you confirm, I'm going to invite Councilmember Fults and Libbey Tucker, as well.....MGH

Michael G. Herring, ICMA-CM
City Administrator

The day before in an email from Patch's Greenbaum to Malberg-Tucker the subject line has now changed to "Chesterfield Patch Editor"

From: Kurt Greenbaum [<mailto:kurt.greenbaum@patch.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, May 08, 2012 11:32 AM
To: Libbey Tucker
Cc: Jean Whitney
Subject: Chesterfield Patch editor

Your note below has come to my attention. The editor of Chesterfield Patch is Jean Whitney, who is cc'ed on this reply. Her contact information is readily available on the Chesterfield Patch site here:

<http://chesterfield.patch.com/users/jean-whitney-2>

I am the regional editor in St. Louis, overseeing all the sites in the area. My contact information is below.

We are always eager to hear from readers and I'm sure Jean would be happy to speak to you or your boss about any questions you might have, as would I. I would request that you start with Jean, who is closest to the coverage in the Chesterfield community.

For the May meeting Herring and Geiger wanted to get a good turnout.

On May 9, 2012, at 1:06 PM, "Michael Herring" <mherring@chesterfield.mo.us> wrote:

Randy: Mayor Geiger wanted me to also invite you to attend! Please advise. TY! MGH

Michael G. Herring, ICMA-CM
City Administrator

From: Michael Herring

Sent: Wednesday, May 09, 2012 1:03 PM

To: Connie Fults
Cc: Bruce Geiger
Subject: Patch

Connie: At Mayor Geiger's request, I have arranged a meeting with the REGIONAL EDITOR for Patch, who happens to be a Chesterfield resident. Mr. Kurt Greenbaum will be at our City Hall, **tomorrow afternoon, at 3:30pm**. Mayor Geiger asked that I extend an invitation to you to attend this meeting, since you have numerous examples of problems/concerns re: PATCH reporting, etc. As you know, Mayor Geiger and you are meeting tomorrow afternoon, at 2pm, with George Stock, et. al. You should be finished with that meeting, in time to meet with Mr. Greenbaum, before the P/PW Committee meeting. Please let me know. TY! MGH

Michael G. Herring, ICMA-CM
City Administrator

In that email Herring seemed to transfer a lot of responsibility for reigning in Patch.com to Mayor Bruce Geiger. After all the invitations Greenbaum sent something unusual for him...an amusing comment to an earlier line from the city claiming the meeting was "Confidential."

From: Kurt Greenbaum <kurt.greenbaum@patch.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 09, 2012 4:44 PM
To: Michael Herring
Subject: Fwd: Chesterfield Patch editor

Well, I guess this isn't a confidential meeting anymore.

Also on May 9 the Malberg-Tucker sent a somewhat snarky email to Chesterfieldpatch.com editor Jean Whitney. Malberg-Tucker complained that Patch was becoming a "tattle tale site." Apparently Malberg-Tucker is referring to Patch.com reporting stupid, incorrect and off point comments made by officials at public meetings.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Libbey Tucker <LTucker@chesterfield.mo.us>
Date: Wed, May 9, 2012 at 4:30 PM
Subject: RE: Chesterfield Patch editor
To: Jean Whitney <jean.whitney@patch.com>
Cc: Kurt Greenbaum <kurt.greenbaum@patch.com>, Michael Herring <mherring@chesterfield.mo.us>

Jean: When you first became editor, as the City's PR contact, I offered to meet with you several times regarding how our City government structure and committee system works and offered to introduce you to the players in our community. I have yet to hear from you on doing that. When Chesterfield Patch first started, we were assured it was a community web site that would provide ACCURATE information and would also include aspects of the community such as art and culture, which is a huge component of Chesterfield. We were assured it was not a "tattle tale" site, but one that is fair and balanced and supports local government. Since you have become editor, the City and many other community organizations are disappointed in the direction the site has taken and quite frankly see Patch as an adversary rather than ally. This is unfortunate, as it used to be quite the opposite. Therefore, we will be meeting with Mr. Greenbaum, to see if this is the general direction of all Patch sites, which doesn't seem to be the case, or if there's something we can work together on to make it the community-friendly site it was promised to be.

Libbey Malberg-Tucker, CEcD

Assistant City Administrator for

Community Services & Economic Development

City of Chesterfield

Whitney didn't waste any time and immediately replied to Malberg-Tucker pointing out her warm welcome to Chesterfield by staff and elected officials.

From: Jean Whitney [mailto:jean.whitney@patch.com]
Sent: Wednesday, May 09, 2012 5:06 PM
To: Libbey Tucker
Cc: Kurt Greenbaum; Michael Herring
Subject: Re: Chesterfield Patch editor

Libbey
Ok.

I'd like to share with you, and Mr. Greenbaum is aware of this, the introduction I got from the City Council the first time I came to a meeting as the editor.

Councilmember Fults, with Mayor Geiger listening in the background, attacked me verbally for about 15 minutes over a column in Patch (pre-programmed by Rachel Heaton) by a Catholic woman who questioned her faith when she was pregnant with a fetus that developed without a brain.

Mrs. Fults described me as a racist, a liar, out to shame Catholics, and much worse. She threatened to do Patch in, with her contacts.

Needless to say I was stunned.

On reflection, I attributed it to Mrs. Fults having minimal experience with professional media, and chose not to write about her outburst in Chesterfield Patch.

As you know, from attending agenda meetings, she continues to cast disparaging comments about Patch, at every opportunity, to my ongoing surprise.

1

I'm sorry I personally did not meet with you initially. No doubt I was under a lot of strain with the change of sites. And I have seen you many times since that time, and I wish you might have suggested it again. No doubt, I'd forgotten the special invite, and I apologize.

I'm sorry that you are now unwilling to meet with me.
I hope your meeting with my manager proves fruitful, in many ways.

Jean

Jean Whitney, Patch Editor
chesterfield.patch.com
314-223-3357
jean.whitney@patch.com

On Fri, May 11, 2012 at 9:39 AM, Michael Herring <mherring@chesterfield.mo.us> wrote:

Kurt: I'm assuming that you will want to include Mayor Geiger and Councilmembers Fults and Logan, when we meet with Jean?!?! I'm actually planning a $\frac{1}{2}$ day vacation this afternoon, but I should be available for a phone conversation: 314-680-7122 (cell). Please give me a call, when it works best for you, between 3pm - 6pm. Next week is going to be somewhat challenging, since I'll be out-of-town on vacation, 5/16 -5/18! Let's discuss further, when we talk, later this afternoon. Thanks, again! MGH

Michael G. Herring, ICMA-CM

A May meeting was held and that was the time that Greenbaum pulled three of my columns concerning the Chesterfield City Council and/or the Outlet Mall sales tax deals and the opposition to the sales tax.

Then came June! City officials wanted more meetings apparently to try and control Patch.com editorial content. Here are invites from Herring to two city councilpersons. Apparently someone else filed a Sunshine Law request in late May prior to mine on June 21. Several emails popped up regarding public records and charging for emails.

From: Michael Herring
Sent: Wednesday, May 30, 2012 2:02 PM
To: Judy Naggier
Cc: Rob Heggie (rheggie@smhhlaw.com); Libbey Tucker
Subject: e-mails to/from Patch

Judy: The attached are the **ONLY** e-mails that I know of, to/from Patch, involving City officials. I have nothing else nor do I know of any other e-mail communication involving Patch. FYI! MGH P.S. Most of the attached deals with a meeting that I was trying to arrange with the Patch Regional Editor. I handled all of the coordination and interaction with "Patch" to arrange that meeting, so Mayor Geiger, Councilmember Fults and Councilmember Logan would not have sent/received any such e-mails.

From: Judy Naggiar
Sent: Friday, June 01, 2012 8:11 AM
To: Michael Herring
Subject: RE: e-mails to/from Patch

Mike: Chief Johnson told me that there is an \$11 charge for research time for the call record documents Mr. Deere requested. Do you have a charge for your research time to find these emails?

From: Michael Herring
Sent: Friday, June 01, 2012 8:12 AM
To: Judy Naggiar
Cc: Rob Heggie (rheggie@smhhlaw.com)
Subject: RE: e-mails to/from Patch

Nope.....took no time at all.....I simply did a search of all e-mails, in both my IN BOX and OUT BOX.....copied whatever came up and forwarded it all to you.....Assuming Rob is OK with releasing any/all of the e-mails that I forwarded, you're good to go. MGH

Michael G. Herring, ICMA-CM
City Administrator

Judy Naggiar

From: Michael Herring
Sent: Friday, June 01, 2012 8:13 AM
To: Bruce Geiger; Connie Fults; Randy Logan (rlogan@wallachtrading.com)
Subject: REMINDER

Meeting this afternoon.....3pm.....Room 202, at City Hall.....with Kurt Greenbaum, Patch Regional Editor, and Jean Whitney.....See you then! MGH

Michael G. Herring, ICMA-CM
City Administrator

From: Michael Herring
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 8:44 AM
To: Libbey Tucker
Cc: Mike Geisel; Thomas McCarthy; Kari Johnson
Subject: PATCH

Libbey: Please contact Jean Whitney regarding ways that PATCH will allow you/us to add things to their website, regarding CITY EVENTS.....as was explained to us, last Friday, by Mr. Greenbaum, Patch's Regional Editor, since there is NOT ENOUGH of "Jean" to cover all events, they want/need us to HELP with the pre-event promotion and the post-event summaries. Including PHOTOS would be a plus. Please work out the details and then share them with Mr. Geisel, Mr. McCarthy and Ms. Johnson and let's take advantage of this offer!!!!

Michael G. Herring, ICMA-CM
City Administrator

From: Libbey Tucker
Sent: Tuesday, June 05, 2012 2:12 PM
To: Mike Geisel; Thomas McCarthy; Kari Johnson
Cc: Michael Herring; Kristoffer Simpson
Subject: Updating Info on Chesterfield Patch

Everyone:

In an effort to ensure we get as much coverage as possible on Patch (www.chesterfieldpatch.com), I wanted make you aware of a couple of features wherein we can add our own content for events and also information on past events or announcements. In March, Kris Simpson added all of the City and Parks events listed in the March newsletter and Parks Guide and has since been adding more the event calendar as he is made aware. All you need to do is have a Patch e-mail sign on and password to be able to do this. Look for the "EVENT" Tab, and then the link that most closely matches what type of event it is. For example, the concerts are listed under "Music." Please use the City, Parks or Amphitheater logos for branding consistency when posting events.

As for the follow up-news or announcements, you'll find this under the NEWS table, then announcements. Same process applies and graphics and photos can be added. Similarly, if a Patch reporter posts an article, we are able to upload additional photos and descriptors, so feel free to do that as you have time.

Since we now have the knowledge about how to do this, please be sure to take a minute before you post something to make sure it's not already out there. Searching by date for an event is probably easiest.

We are working to utilize Patch as best we can to promote City news and events, since they seem to have a large following in our community. Thank you for your help and let me know if you have questions.

Libbey

A compliment!

From: Robey Taylor [mailto:rtaylor@chesterfieldmochamber.com]
Sent: Wednesday, June 06, 2012 2:04 PM
To: 'Angela Schreck'; 'Bob Anderson'; Bruce Geiger; 'Cheri Bliefertich'; 'Chuck Antal'; 'Colleen Lang'; 'Darla Wertenberger'; 'Don Meyer'; 'Ed Hinders'; 'Gene Kirtser'; 'Jack Hoffmann'; 'Jane Massey'; 'Jennifer Hill'; 'Jerry Right'; 'John Bales'; 'Ken Butler'; 'Lynese Hoffman'; 'Mike Doster'; Michael Herring; Ray Johnson; 'Robey Taylor'; 'Stephanie Wilson'; 'Thomas Vineyard'; 'Tim Carolan'; 'Tim Jones'; 'Tom Keller'; 'Tony Goslee'; 'Trey Luina'; 'Veronica Conley'
Subject: fyi

The Chesterfield Patch did a great story about the concert last night.

Chesterfield patch, if you google it, it should pop up.

RT

Robey R. Taylor
Executive Director
Chesterfield Chamber of Commerce
636.632.2200

GRADING POLITICIANS BY THEIR CARS A HIT AND A MISS: The tongue-in cheek column I wrote about politicians and their cars hit a very raw nerve. It also generated a lot of hits and reader comments. <http://chesterfield.patch.com/articles/we-grade-politicians-and-their-cars>

The response was quick from staff and elected City officials. First of all, the column dealt with politicians and not state government or city government. Apparently Herring thought that it was his duty as city administrator to comment on the column on the record to Greenbaum and to the councilpersons which was about politics.

Mike Herring (mherring@chesterfield.mo.us) has shared the following article from Chesterfield Patch:



I'm 'Grading' Politicians By Their Cars

It used to make a difference what kind of cars an elected official drove, not so...

By John Hoffmann

I thought you might be interested in this article from the Chesterfield Patch.
Kurt: Is this sort of thing really necessary? VERY DISAPPOINTING! MGH

Apparently Matt Segal was both upset and found it difficult to speak for himself! Here is the first email he sent.

From: Matt Segal
Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2012 10:23 AM
To: Michael Herring; cfults@charter.net; bgeiger100@gmail.com
Subject: FW: Continued Concerns

Are you kidding me? I need advise as I'm about to jump through the phone.

Segal followed that up with an email to Whitney and Greenbaum saying he would no longer speak to any Patch.com staffers. He also incorrectly referred to my opinion column as an article. Apparently Mr. Segal has been so removed from newspapers and the media that he doesn't understand what is an opinion column and what is a news article.

Segal also vowed to contact Patch.com advertisers and get them to pull their advertising. If Segal finds any local Chesterfield area merchants advertising on Patch.com, please let Patch.com know because there are no ads appearing on a regular basis. Mr. Segal is really going to have to work hard to affect Patch's ad revenue. In 2011 Patch.com lost \$100,000,000. Maybe with Mr. Segal's hard work in 2012 they might lose \$100,000,100!

On Wed, Jun 13, 2012 at 9:32 AM, Matt Segal <MSegal@chesterfield.mo.us> wrote:

Mr. Greenbaum and Ms. Whitney;

I will make this very quick, and to the point. John Hoffmann's article on what politician's drive is complete rubbish. You published pictures of public official's license plates. This is complete insanity on so many levels.

While I understand your website was going to take steps to move in a positive direction, you just took a huge step back. Where are your journalistic standards?

I have copied our Mayor and President Pro on this email, as I will be making the choice of not recognizing any of the Chesterfield Patch's staff from this day going forward. In addition, I will be contacting several of your sponsors, who I know personally, and advise them to pull advertising. I will encourage our Mayor and President Pro Temp to do the same, and advise my peers of the same.

It's a shame you (Jean and Kurt) have chosen this path, very disappointing.

Councilmember Matt Segal
[314-749-7440](tel:314-749-7440)

Segal did not wait for any advice from Herring and or take the advice of colleagues and went ahead and responded to Patch.com.

From: Michael Herring
Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2012 10:37 AM
To: Matt Segal
Subject: RE: Continued Concerns

I am on a conference call.....will call later! MGH

Michael G. Herring, ICMA-CM
City Administrator

From: Jean Whitney [jean.whitney@patch.com]
Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2012 10:07 AM
To: Matt Segal
Subject: Re: Continued Concerns

Are you ok with your email being made public?

Jean

On Jun 13, 2012, at 11:52 AM, Matt Segal <MSegal@chesterfield.mo.us> wrote:

Being that you went public with my comments prior to me responding, did you really want me to answer your question?

P.S. Has anybody heard or seen of Rachel Heaton, she is sorely missed.

COUNCILMAN CASEY WADES IN: Mike Casey who up to the car grade column decided to wade in and suggest councilperson avoid Patch.com writers. By the way Casey got a "D" in the car grades column...he only likes to drive high-end German automobiles.

From: Mike Casey [mcasey@metalexchangecorp.com]
Sent: Thursday, June 14, 2012 1:35 PM
To: Michael Herring
Cc: Matt Segal
Subject: RE: an example of a public officials engaging on Patch

Stay away from Patch, nothing positive would result.

Michael Casey
Metal Exchange Corporation
111 West port Plaza Suite 700
St. Louis, MO. 63146-3016
314-517-7777 (O)

THE OFFICIAL PATCH RESPONSE: Here is what Greenbaum wrote back to the complaints about the Car Grades column:

From: Kurt Greenbaum [kurt.greenbaum@patch.com]
Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2012 2:06 PM
To: Matt Segal
Cc: jean.whitney@patch.com; Michael Herring; Bruce Geiger; Connie Fults
Subject: Re: Continued Concerns

Mr. Segal:

I shared this response already with Mr. Herring, and I wanted to give you the courtesy of a reply as well. I am sorry you are upset with the column.

I will concede that it's a thin column, but I also think it was meant to be a bit tongue-in-cheek. The information about the cars is public record and I make no apologies for it's use; the value-judgments John Hoffmann applies are obviously opinion-based and, as I said, it seemed to me to be meant in a lighter vein. Clearly, you feel it missed the mark in that regard and I'm sorry.

Again, as I told Mike, Jean and I will further reevaluate the extent to which we use Hoffmann's columns. I assure you, we will do that.

I must add, however, that we have consistently asked members of the Chesterfield council and administration to consider using Patch as a forum to reach readers and share their points of view — on any and all topics, not just this one. I really wish you and others would consider it.

Having your response to this particular column would be very powerful and I assure you it would get as much prominence if not more than the original.

Thank you for taking the time to share your concerns. I really do appreciate it.

Kurt Greenbaum
Regional Editor, Missouri
314-707-7891
kurt.greenbaum@patch.com

What Greenbaum didn't put in writing was that he would be silencing his only political opinion columnist left in the St. Louis region.

AND FINALLY: It is interesting that those involved, Mayor Greiger, City Administrator Mike Herring, Councilpersons Bob Casey, Matt Segal, Randy Logan and Connie Fults apparently do not know the difference between a political opinion column and a news article. These are wealthy (at least according to the cars they drive) people and supposedly well educated.

I also found it interesting they have no problem attacking Patch.com editors Greenbaum and Whitney who are both Chesterfield residents and voters.

I think Matt Segal should avoid control freaks and other upset individuals on the council when asking for advice. He should ask Barry Flachsbart, whose father was a leading news reporter at the Post-Dispatch in the 1950s and 60s. Flachsbart also helped pay his way through college as a stringer at the Post-Dispatch and a sports stringer for the Associated Press.

I don't know what Barry's advice would be...mine is..."Grow some thicker skin. You are a politician for goodness sakes. A free press is not your personal PR machine.

BACKGROUNDS:

Kurt Greenbaum left the Post Dispatch where he was under a cloud as a website editor whose job was to try and get more reader involvement with the paper's online edition. He never did any real reporting in his career and is a non-St. Louis native. Despite other jobs he is best known for the incident at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Greenbaum asked a meaningless question like you see constantly on Patch taking polls and getting responses that mean absolutely nothing. This one was something like "What was the oddest thing you have ever eaten that tasted good?"

One reader replied with a one word answer that had a sexual meaning. Greenbaum deleted the answer and the reader posted it again. Instead of blocking the reader's email address, Greenbaum was able to identify the person through the email address as working at a private school. He called the school to complain about the teacher using the school's email and the teacher was fired.

That might have been bad enough...but Greenbaum had a blog, where he apparently thought people really needed to know what a low level Post-Dispatch editor was doing and thinking on a daily and hourly basis. Greenbaum got on his blog and bragged about how he got the teacher fired.

http://blogs.riverfronttimes.com/dailyrft/2009/11/stltodaycom_censor_turns_tattle-tale_kurt_greenbaum_name_that_vulgar_expression.php

http://blogs.riverfronttimes.com/dailyrft/2009/11/vigilante_website_out_to_destroy_stltoday_editor_kurt_greenbaum.php

http://blogs.riverfronttimes.com/dailyrft/2009/11/meet_the_person_behind_kurt_greenbaum_is_a_pussy_dot_com.php

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/11/18/kurt-greenbaum-man-loses_n_362406.html

<http://www.pixiq.com/article/does-kurt-greenbaum-need-to-resign>

<http://punchingkitty.com/2010/06/22/kurt-greenbaum-leaving-stltoday-for-greener-patches/>

Jean Whitney is a long time journalist having worked for national magazines based in New York, New Jersey newspapers and San Francisco bay area newspapers. Her husband is the art director of a national magazine and her daughter recently quit a job with a national magazine to do charity work in South America.

ME: I ran the “alternative newspaper” in high school. At the same time I was a local disc jockey at several St. Louis radio stations. I was a police officer, police detective, supervisor, fire and arson investigator and assistant police chief here, in Kansas City and in Maryland outside of Washington DC.

I did freelance writing, worked the sports desk at the Kansas City Star, covered Congress and the Justice Department for several criminal justice national trade magazines. I also was a sportswriter and baseball writer on the east coast for eight years working for daily & weekly newspapers, magazines and websites. Back in St. Louis I was a news service editor for four years and an elected alderman in Town and Country.

PATCH.COM The St. Louis region was part of a massive expansion of Patch.com, the AOL super local news sites. Patch.com also double in size about the time the St. Louis area went on line.

AOL was betting people in affluent areas wanted local news and would find it on their computers. Sites were launched in mostly affluent areas. You will not be finding any Patch sites for Pagedale, Jennings, Wellston or even St. Louis Hills.

At the time of the late fall 2010 St. Louis launch, Patch went all out with full time employees hired as site editors surrounded by freelance writers, columnists, critics and photographers.

It was clear that the non-St. Louisian Greenbaum didn't know as much about St. Louis when he lumped the Webster Groves and Kirkwood areas in one site. People in Webster don't care about what is happening in Kirkwood unless it's bad and vice versa. Those sites were eventually separated.

He also put Town and Country and Manchester together on one site. That is crazy. People in T&C have NOTHING IN COMMON with the folks in Manchester. T&C is full of millionaires and Manchester is a working; class middle class city of 1,000 sq ft to 1,500 sq ft ranch houses.

I had to laugh when the T&C-Manchester patch editor, who does not live in either area, hired a freelancer to do a dating and single scene column. There is a stretch! What do you cover... the late night crowd on ladies night at a sports bar on Manchester Road or a coming out ball at the Bellerive Country club? That column lasted all of a month.

While site editors were originally told to hire everyone to cover everything including high school sports, soon after the editors made arrangements for sports coverage, Greenbaum took it away from them by hiring two regional sports editors who hired their own people. The thinking was that high school sports and even kid summer sports would draw readers and increase hits.

Having been a sportswriter in the Washington, DC and Baltimore areas I knew better. Only high school players' parents, grandparents and girl or boyfriend really cared. The amount of increased readership was not worth the expense.

Within two months budgets were tightened and freelancers were being paid less. Five months later one of the two regional sports editors was fired. The second was canned less than a year after the launch while freelance budgets continued to be cut. Sports coverage was scaled way back and was back in the hands of local editors.

In less than a year editors who could spend \$200 a week on freelance writers were cut back to \$200 a month. Starting in July that \$200 a month is getting cut back again.

In 2011 Patch.com lost \$100,000,000 and kept AOL for making a profit. Patch.com was the major issue at the annual AOL stockholder meeting. First a March New York Times article followed by a May Wall Street Journal article showed AOL might not be able to fund Patch.com into 2013.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303610504577420193866895860.html>

Patch.com editor-in-chief Brain Farnham quit in May. He sent out a two page farewell letter. After thanking management staffers for their help, Farnham closed with some advice for those sticking around.

“A final note: This thing we’ve been trying to build here can’t be fueled by timidity or complacency.”

Apparently Greenbaum did not get this message or chose to ignore it.

CARTOONS:



From Charlotte Peters' kid:



