

Folks:

The idea of the Clarion was an idea brought forward by David Berman. I supported that idea and moved it forward.

As I am sure you are aware, getting the Transition Committee, then DW/P to agree to go with the Clarion was a task. The major issues were as follows:

- Attracting volunteers on a continuing basis for a full time unpaid job.
- The cost to the Association
- The potential effect on DW/P
- Duplication of efforts
- Effect on Spirit
- Who would be responsible to the Association for content, and the management of the newspaper?

We were able to answer these issues by:

- Providing a list of volunteers
- Recommending that an outside vendor handle all aspects of advertising and publication essentially assuring no new staff would be hired.
- Assuring the TC as well as DW/P that the Director of Communications would be in charge and responsible
- Establishing the Editorial Content Committee
- Negotiating a deal with the vendor to share ad revenue without the addition of personnel.

Once the TC recommendations were approved, the Board gave approval to open negotiations with World Publishing. These negotiations went nowhere due in equal parts to interference, an apparent lack of capital, and rumors of production problems with World which were later found to be factual.

The presentation of the “Business Plan Clarion Newspaper” was at best mediocre lacking both an sincere expression of interest on the part of the presenters as well as an admitted lack of passion for the task. The presentation opened with the admonition that the Board should not look at this plan in a negative manner. It continued along this negative vein for nearly 20 minutes. The Board was advised that the chair as well as those participating in the presentation were “reluctant volunteers” none of whom wanted to take a leadership role in developing the Clarion. We were told that the “passionate leader” that is “required” to make the newspaper a success is out there, but were not told where, how, or when this person would be found. Remaining unanswered is the question of whether any of the “volunteers” will be interested enough to take on this task on a semi-fulltime basis.

We were assured there would be plenty of advertisers yet we saw nothing to show us that there had been or is an expressed interest in advertising in this kind of publication. The Director of Communications indicated that she had not seen much interest on the part of advertisers toward a newspaper.

We were told that 50 or 90 volunteers were needed to make the newspaper work. We were told they were effectively working on the Spirit. The Director of Communications indicated that there were about 50 people that turned in small reports to the Spirit but many of these were not reports that were ready for print.

We were shown revenue and cost projections on a cost added basis. While the figures showed a profit, unaccounted for were costs associated with soliciting, billing, and collecting the ad revenue, allocated costs of personnel, equipment, supplies, etc, etc.

We were told there would be no investment required for the newspaper yet the plan shows that the Association would have to pay the printer and distributor nearly \$6,000 per publication for their services. No documents and no part of the presentation showed or indicated real interest on the part of advertisers to purchase ad space in this type publication.

In looking at this plan as a fiduciary, I was reminded of the general definition of a fiduciary which, **“is to act for someone else’s benefit, while subordinating one’s personal interests to that of the other person.”** I then asked myself the following questions;

1. What is the management structure and line of responsibility?
2. What is the plan to obtain these 50-90 volunteers?
3. What are the personnel requirements?
4. What is the training process and who will do it?
5. What is the implementation schedule?
6. What are the real costs of this venture in terms of dollars and personnel?
7. Would I personally invest in the venture?
8. Would I recommend this venture to someone else?

Clearly the business plan did not answer questions 1-6 which left me with no choice other than to answer 7&8 with a firm no.

While we were asked not to take a negative view, we were also asked to let them have the “opportunity to fail.” Folks, this is not grammar school. In the business world, that statement alone is the first step to failure.

Members of the Board asked, or attempted to ask the presenters questions. Each of these questions was treated as condemnations, not by the Committee, but by a member of the Board. Nearly all the questions asked of the presenters remain unanswered.

One of the vendor quotes was addressed to a Board member who is not a member of the committee, this is very probably as clear a conflict of interest as I have ever seen.

At best the presentation did not stimulate the kind of confidence in me that would cause me to believe that the presenters had a plan, a training program, or a passion to bring the newspaper to fruition.

I have been a proponent of the newspaper since day one arguing at great length, and I might say, convincingly, for the newspaper. With David Berman assuring the TC and the Board that he was going to be the man leading this venture and considering the job both he **and the proposed vendor** did in producing a prototype, it was easy to support. **That Clarion was a totally different concept than the one presented Friday.**

We must, as a Board, keep in mind that volunteers can and will leave without notice, will take vacations at inopportune times, are not responsible to a higher authority, tire easily, and do not take direction well. We must also remember that the Committee itself is transitory, that is each member has a specific length of time that he/she can serve as a committee member. The Chairman has time limitation as well.

Based on the draft “Business Plan Clarion Newspaper” that was presented to the Board on Friday, I cannot in good faith vote to expend resident money to “give them a chance to fail.” I would suggest that this issue be sent back to the Committee with the recommendation that they not return to the Board until such time as they produce a thoroughly thought out and complete business plan providing a plan of action that would entuse the Board to support it, not “to fail’, but rather to succeed.

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