

RECEIVED

AUG - 8 2016

Public Service  
Commission

# MOUNTAIN CITIZEN

Main Street -- Cain Building  
P.O. Box 1029  
Inez, Kentucky 41224  
PHONE (606) 298-7570 FAX (606) 298-3711  
E-MAIL: [mountaincitizen@bellsouth.net](mailto:mountaincitizen@bellsouth.net)

Aug. 4, 2016

Talina Mathews  
Executive Director  
Kentucky Public Service Commission  
P.O. Box 615, 211 Sower Blvd.  
Frankfort, Ky., 40602-0615

Dear Ms. (Mrs.) Mathews:

Please accept this as a cover letter for a document I ask that be placed in the record for PSC Case No. 2016-00142 against the Martin County Water District. My name is Gary Ball, and an investigation was opened in April based partly on a complaint I filed last year against MCWD.

The reason for this letter is to show how the water district treats customers in regards to complaints and things of that nature. To give you some background on me, I am the editor of the Mountain Citizen, a weekly newspaper in Inez, (along with being a water customer) and our publication has brought to light many serious deficiencies as far as service and water quality.

I hope this letter helps shed light on why a lot of customers feel intimidated and are basically afraid of the consequences of complaining. To give you a little insight into what I assume is the reason for the attached letter, we reported on two recent notices of violations posted on the Kentucky Division of Water's website. One turned out to be incorrect and was rescinded. The other stood. Bill Harvey, the author of the attached letter and MCWD board chairman, wrote a letter, sent it to our office by his wife, (the letter had a photo ID of his driver's license attached, I assume for verification that he was the author, and I've attached it with personal information redacted), and asked that it be printed.

I knew what he was stating in his letter was incorrect; therefore I didn't publish it. I also knew that one point he made in the letter about the district not being in violation of exceeding disinfectant byproducts for the first quarter of this year was also incorrect. He stated in his letter that I "argued with a representative from the Division of Water that their readings were incorrect" and that tests revealed they were "well within standards." Actually, my question was answered by a person from the Kentucky Rural Water Association, who works for the district, and who obviously hadn't seen the report.

To make a long story short, Harvey's wife posted a copy of the letter on her Facebook page after reviewing our newspaper expecting we would print it. We didn't because of these two errors. On the day this occurred, MCWD customers received a notice on their bill that the water district had, in fact, violated the standards for disinfectant byproducts for not only the first quarter of this year, but also the second quarter. Publishing his letter would have been something that water district does routinely — disseminate false and inaccurate information to, in my opinion, deceive the public. It's a constant battle where they point the finger at us, arguing that we have in Harvey's words "repeatedly demonstrated (our) inability to extract the correct information from the Division of Water reports" with "errors (that) could go on but would be too lengthy to list further." (If pressed, I believe he couldn't give even one example of an error.) He's obviously engaged in promoting propaganda; we're devoted to fixing our water problems — again.

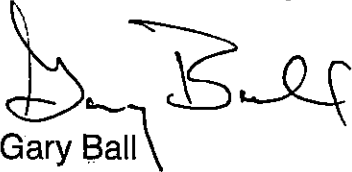
I said all this to make one point. Although the composition of the water board may have changed in terms of membership over the years, their methodology remains the same — ignore the problem and whomever causes trouble or complains, and use whatever means — in our case defaming the newspaper in hopes of costing us advertisement — as "pay back."

If they are willing to do this to me — as editor of a newspaper that continues to fight for good, clean, safe water — what kind of tactic would they use against “Joe Blow” who lives up one of these hollows who is weary of waking up each day to brown water running from his tap?

Look, I understand and empathize with these customers. I’ve gone so far as to help one family who contacted me after a very long period of time with horrific service — no pressure at times during the daylight hours — and who were somewhat reluctant to ask for my help since a family member has a close relative who works in a very sensitive position in the county government who might lose his/her job. (I helped this person file a complaint along with filing videotapes showing what problems this household was going through. Ginni Smith can fill you in on the details of this complaint.)

This family’s plight didn’t make the newspaper. I helped them for no other reason other than I know firsthand what they’re going through as a customer who has had to endure the same conditions. I didn’t do it for an “atta, boy, you got ‘em” or a pat on the back. I did it because it was the right thing to do.

In closing, I hope this shows the basic disdain exhibited by those in charge of the water district for customers. If you complain — as I have numerous times with the PSC — and if you “make trouble” for them, as I’m well aware of by Mr. Harvey’s allegations against me and our reporting of “errors too lengthy ... to mention,” this is their response. It is a strategy that has worked here in the hills of eastern Kentucky — use whatever means to shut them up!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Ball". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "G" and "B".

Gary Ball  
Editor  
Mountain Citizen

Letter to the Editor of the Mountain Citizen

Martin County Residents who receive water from the Martin County Water District,

Once again the Mountain Citizen has failed to accurately and responsibly report the facts to you. The editorial staff has seized upon an error made by the state of KY Division of Water as an opportunity to degrade and demean the character and reputations of people willing to voluntarily devote their time trying to resolve problems with our aging and out-dated water and sewer system in this county. If the newspaper staff's efforts were put into helping rather than trying to further their own personal revenge and agendas, how much better things could be in this county, not just with water but every other issue they fail to report on accurately and truthfully, even when they know differently. Last week's headline article reported your local water district had 2 horrendous violations. That report has been revealed to be a mistake by the KY Division of Water. There were no notices received by the Martin County Water District on July 12 (as the newspaper reported) regarding the 2 violations. After seeing the headlines of the sole newspaper in the county, the water district business manager, contacted the KY Rural Water Association as to why the water district had not been notified as the newspaper stated about the 2 violations. The business manager was told the Division of Water had made a mistake and the Martin County Water District was not in violation. WOW!! Our watch dogs must have been salivating when they found this information before it could be corrected!!

The Division of Water is in the process of rescinding the violation that was inaccurately posted on their website. You can bet that if that fact even makes it into the paper it will be buried in small print somewhere near the back of the tabloid and not the bold headline above the fold on the front page as in the case of reporting the error.

For whatever reason and it may be personal with the editorial staff, the Mountain Citizen is not a partner with improvements with the Martin County Water District. The newspaper has repeatedly demonstrated its inability to extract the correct information from the Division of Water reports. Case in point in a past publication, the Division of Water's testing for "tthm's" for the first quarter of this year stated the Martin County Water District was well within specifications. An editor from the Mountain Citizen argued with a representative from the Division of Water at a town hall meeting arranged by Senator Ray Jones that their readings were incorrect. Another example, a writer of the Mountain Citizen reported the reading was 1.04 mg/l when the correct value was .104mg/l (a significant difference). The list of errors could go on but would be too lengthy to list further. But of course the truth does not support the editorial staff's agenda so therefore it is ignored or changed.

My thoughts are the next 'sound off' topic should be "should businesses in Martin County continue to advertize in such an UN-RELIABLE tabloid??"

My thoughts are the next 'sound off' topic should be "should businesses in Martin County continue to advertize in such an UN-RELIABLE tabloid??"

Far be it for this me to use the same character degrading and demeaning adjectives to refer to members of the editorial staff of such an unreliable tabloid, even though very appropriate.

Of course all the above information comes from an unnamed source.

Thank you.

---

Bill Harvey, Chairperson of the Martin County Water District

(I am one of the inept, unsuccessful, impotent, and basically incompetent member's of the Martin County Water District Board - as described in the editorial column last week).

*Bill Harvey*



My cell phone number is:

606-626-6608