

Monday, October 14, 2024

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Seneca County

A Life Connected



NEWS

Fallacies in Advertiser-Tribune story exposed

📅 October 14, 2024 👤 Sheri Trusty 👁 126 Views

By Sheri Trusty, Seneca County Media Relations Coordinator

This Halloween season, Advertiser-Tribune reporter, Kayla Trevino, went on a witch hunt. She shined her big flashlight into the Seneca County Commissioners’ office and mistakenly thought she had a victim in her sites. Then, when she returned back to her own office with an empty game bag, she manufactured her prey.

Trevino wrote a story for the Advertiser-Tribune that was full of fallacies about Seneca County Commissioner Bill Frankart. Trevino approached this story with biased intention and an apparent dream of making a name for herself as a bulldog journalist. In the end, she has been exposed as an unreliable and incompetent reporter. She did not verify facts, and she did not vet her sources.

Trevino's story is a failed exposé marked by faulty journalism and sensationalism and is a little-disguised attempt to destroy the reputation of one of Seneca County's most respected and dedicated elected officials, Commissioner Bill Frankart. In the end, Trevino's lack of integrity in this story may impact the well-being of a child.

Let's strip the story down.

The Protection Order

Trevino begins the story by saying that the commissioner "had a civil stalking protection order placed against him." This is false. The commissioner has not been served with a protection order, and he was unaware that a formal police report had been filed. According to the story, Commissioner Frankart's former daughter-in-law, Sydnie Phillips, filed police reports on Sept. 20 and Sept. 22 in the Mason Police Department. Commissioner Frankart was never contacted by the Mason police. Had the complaints been valid, he would have been contacted for questioning, but he was not. Had the commissioner committed a crime, he would have been charged. He was not. The commissioner first learned of the formal complaints when Trevino contacted him for the story on Oct. 9, approximately three weeks after the initial report. The police took the report and found no reason to act upon it.

Trevino did not allow Commissioner Frankart to address this issue prior to the publication of the story. In an Oct. 9 email to the commissioner, Trevino informed the commissioner that she was writing a story related to the police reports, and she gave him a deadline of Tuesday, Oct. 15, at 2:30 p.m. to respond to her questions. Then, in an Oct. 10 email to the commissioner and his attorney, Dean Henry, Trevino upped the deadline. She wrote, "If you would like to comment on these issues, please provide a response by 5 p.m. Friday (10/11)." This new deadline gave them only one day to respond, and yet she did not adhere to the deadline she had established.

The story was published online on Oct. 11 at 12:45 p.m., over four hours before the deadline. Henry was working on a response that would have clarified her misinformation. Trevino chose to publish a story filled with fallacies rather than properly investigate all the facts from both sides of the issue.



Advertiser-Tribune reporter, Kayla Trevino, failed to verify facts and vet her sources in her failed exposé about Seneca County Commissioner Bill Frankart.

The Tracking Device

Trevino writes in her opening paragraph that the commissioner “was accused of placing a tracking device on a minor’s suitcase.” This is sensationalistic, amateur reporting. Trevino knows that this issue is referring to the commissioner’s granddaughter, yet she uses the word “minor” to imply a sinister situation. Trevino attempted to mislead the reader with deceptive vulgarity.

The tracking device was in a suitcase that has been owned by the Frankarts for two years. The Frankarts had recently returned from a family vacation, and the tracking device was in the suitcase when custody of the commissioner’s granddaughter was transferred to her mother.

A Missing Granddaughter

On Aug. 12, 2022, an arrest warrant was filed against Sydnie Phillips when she absconded with the commissioner’s granddaughter. For three months, the Frankarts had no idea where their granddaughter was or if she was safe.

In her story, Trevino attempts to make issue of Chris Huffman’s work for Henry, yet she fails to clarify that Huffman, a retired police officer, legally performed contract work for Behm & Henry, LLC. The law firm has utilized Huffman’s services for 17 years.

Huffman was instrumental in the return of Commissioner Frankart’s granddaughter. Through his investigative work in Pennsylvania, Huffman discovered that Sydnie was arrested for public intoxication. Local Pennsylvania police had discovered Sydnie intoxicated in a car in a parking lot while her daughter was left at home with a babysitter. The child was returned to her family in Ohio, and Sydnie was charged.

“I am extremely grateful to Chris Huffman because he found our granddaughter,” Frankart said. “We are grateful for his dedication and hard work.”

The Accusers

Before writing her story, Trevino did not do the necessary research to substantiate the credibility of the people making the claims against Commissioner Frankart. A brief investigation would have raised red flags that should have forced Trevino to make the moral decision to vet her sources. Instead, she rode the wave of sensationalism and is now publicly drowning in her lack of credibility.

The charge against Sydnie for absconding with her daughter is not her only charge.

Sydnie Phillips

Other criminal charges include, but are not limited to:

- Disorderly Conduct, Bellevue Municipal Court, Sept., 2017
- Failure to Control, Clyde Municipal Court, Nov., 2020
- Driving Under the Influence of Alcohol, Clyde Municipal Court, May, 2021
- Having Weapons under Disability, Clyde Municipal Court, May, 2021
- Public Drunkenness, Magisterial District Court, Mercer County, PA, Sept., 2022

Lisa Phillips

In her story, Trevino also quotes Sydnie Phillips' mother, Lisa Phillips. Her list of court cases includes, but are not limited to:

- Domestic Violence, State of Ohio vs. Lisa Phillips, December, 2000.
- Loss of custody of Sydnie by an emergency motion, Lorain County Court of Common Pleas, December, 2000.
- Loss of custody of Sydnie, Lorain County Court of Common Pleas, 2012.
- Disorderly Conduct Intoxicated and booked in Lorain County Jail, Aug. 6, 2021.

Shameful Attacking of Family

Trevino not only attacked Commissioner Frankart in her story, but she also attempted to publicly shame his entire family. Commissioner Frankart is appalled and sickened that Trevino would attack the family members of elected officials, and he is grateful for the many community members and elected officials from across Northwest Ohio who have reached out to express their support of him and their shared disgust of the story's unethical attack. Trevino's attempt to humiliate the family of an elected official exposes the depraved and unprincipled depths of her professional ethics.

In Closing

Commissioner Frankart has improved the lives of thousands of Seneca County residents, first as a longtime Adams Township Trustee and now as a Seneca County Commissioner. He has made untold personal and financial sacrifices to impact the well-being of county residents and has become a trusted advocate for countless locals. Every day, he receives multiple calls and texts from people looking for help. There is no chain of command that his constituents must work through. He always offers a direct line to his attention and his assistance.

Trevino's witch hunt attempted to end the commissioner's tireless work for the county, but the truth has been revealed. Now, Commissioner Frankart can continue his dedication to creating a positive future for Seneca County.

Trevino's story damaged people, negatively impacted the county, and encircled the life of a child with lies. Trevino has been wearing her Halloween costume too long – the uniform of a reputable journalist. Her story stripped her costume off, and now she'll have to celebrate Halloween wearing nothing but ineptitude.

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