

# Resident says Marshfield officials falsified records

## City contends clerk interpreted statements accurately

By Linda Greer  
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A Marshfield resident who asked the Board of Aldermen twice in the past year to impeach the mayor now says city officials broke two local ordinances at an April meeting. City officials denied any wrongdoing.

Resident Steven Gullett, former vice chairman of the now defunct Mayor's Commission on Human Rights, said Clerk Terri Taylor intentionally made him look silly when she transcribed his comments about bombs and underwear.

Gullett said Taylor also erred in the April 8 board minutes on his comments about the municipal election results, and parks worker Don Burney disrespected his religious title at the April 22 board meeting.

Since the board unanimously approved the April 8 minutes at the April 22 meeting, Gullett said they are now "falsified documents," grounds for dismissing appointed officials.

### Sunshine Law

The Missouri Sunshine Law requires only that board votes be recorded in the minutes. Board discussion and public comments need not be noted.

Gullett sent an e-mail message to City Administrator Dan McMillan after the meeting, requesting a public apology for the

"false statements" in the minutes.

Gullett demanded that the person responsible for the "defaming lies that were printed and approved in the minutes" be fired, according to city codes and policies.

"Dan McMillan called me back and said that was Taylor's opinion on what was said, so it stays in the minutes," Gullett said later

McMillan also told the Marshfield Mail that the minutes "stand as they are."

McMillan said the city clerk prepares a draft of the minutes for the board's approval.

Before the meeting, "the mayor reads it, of course," McMillan said.

The Marshfield employee handbooks states that falsifying records is cause for immediate dismissal.

Although the Missouri Sunshine Law requires only that votes be recorded in minutes, discussion should also be included, Missouri Press Association attorney Jean Maneke said.

"It would be foolish for them not to include in there what they did and why they did it," Maneke said.

### April 8 meeting

Referring to a brown paper bag of seeds he

brought to the meeting, Gullett said terrorists do not make bombs out of materials such as that. He said the city began posting police officers and searching visitors' bags at meetings because he brought a similar seed bag to a March meeting.

At least one uniformed officer attends all committee and board meetings. Bags are searched before council meetings.

City Attorney David "Chuck" Replogle said two federal law enforcement agencies recommended the increased security. He said he could not disclose why.

Webster County Sheriff Royce Cole admonished Gullett at the meeting, saying paper bags wrapped in tape will scare people, and that such a package does look like a bomb.

"According to what I have seen in the news

media about how bombs are made, my underwear is the most recent used bomb that I have seen used where someone was trying to blow up something with a bomb," Gullett said at the meeting. "And, a shoe was also used to make a bomb."

The minutes stated, "Gullett said he could use his underwear or his shoe to make a bomb."

Also at the April 8 meeting, Gullett said he has had a lot of training in

bombs.

"And, in all of the pictures I have seen, I have never seen a bomb packaged like that," Gullett said at the meeting.

The minutes stated, "Gullett said he was an expert in bombs, and he has not seen a bomb in a package similar to the one he brought in."

"I never said I could make a bomb," Gullett later said, adding that he also did not say he had seen a bomb. "My only reference was to pictures."

### Election results

As the board prepared to certify the April 6 election results at the April 8 meeting, Gullett objected.

"I would like to state these election results are illegal and invalid because my name was unlawfully withheld from the ballot to run for alderman," Gullett said. "And I intend to pursue litigation."

The minutes stated: "Steve Gullett did not agree with the certification, and said he intends to pursue litigation."

"I never stated that I agreed or disagreed," Gullett later said.

Gullett said he is working with two law firms that are corroborating on filing charges against the city.

At the end of the filing period in March, city offi-

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cials notified Gullett and three other candidates, two for aldermen seats and one challenger for mayor, they

could not be certified for the election for various reasons. In Gullett's case, his household owed for a city water bill.

Gullett said he asked Taylor when he filed for the East Ward seat if he owed any city fees. He said Taylor told him he did not.

With Gullett's disqualification, incumbent Alderman Tommy Owen ran unopposed.

Incumbent Mayor C.R. "Bob" Clark also ran unopposed after candidate Hoover Case was disqualified.

Residents Laura Bitting and Michael Weaver also were disqualified, allowing Edward Noland to run unopposed for the seat being vacated by West Ward Alderwoman Barbara Carroll.

#### **Religious views**

Gullett objected at the April 22 meeting when

Alderman Jim Downing said the only perfect person on Earth was gone now, referring to Jesus Christ.

Gullett, a Sioux medicine man and reverend, said Downing's statement implied that the God whom Native Americans worship is less than perfect.

Many in the nearly full meeting room laughed when Gullett said Downing's comment crossed the boundary of separation of church and state.

"Those people there thought it was real funny,"

Gullett said in a follow-up interview. "We Indian people were greatly appalled that this government official was stating the only perfect person ever on Earth was a male, when our prophet is a female."

Parks worker Don Burney stood up at the meeting and said Gullett is not a reverend any more, as "no minister acts the way you do."

Gullett said Burney's

statement is slander and possibly criminal since Gullett is a legally ordained minister, although not of the Christian faith.

"That gives him no right to speak to me that way and ridicule me and my tribe's religious traditions and beliefs in an alderman meeting, especially when I had the floor," Gullett said later. "All because I am of a different belief."

#### **Complaints**

The Marshfield employee handbook states that employees, on or off duty, are "expected to act in a manner that will solicit trust and confidence from the public."

Gullett said he sent his complaints to Assistant Attorney General Margaret Landwehr.

"She said the Attorney General tries to work with cities rather than prosecuting them," Gullett said, adding that two law firms are instead reviewing his claims.

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