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**TRANSPARENCY KEY TO REQUEST
FOR PIRATE PRESS DOCUMENTS**

BDN Boonville
Daily News
Boonville, MO
Circ. 10332
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Dear Boonville,

On Monday afternoon, BDN publisher Deborah Marshall received a call from a concerned resident wondering why we had sought documents from the Boonville R-1 School District about decisions surrounding the Oct. 2 issue of The Pirate Press.

It's an important question. You, as the reader, deserve to know why we have decided to pursue this story.

First and foremost, it is not my goal to lead or in any way be party to a witch hunt. Walter Williams, a Boonville native who became the first dean of the Missouri School of Journalism, stated in "The Journalist's Creed" that "journalism which succeeds best" is that which "seeks to give every man a chance and, as far as law and honest wage and recognition of human brotherhood can make it so, an equal chance."

I agree. It has been my goal to give all parties involved in this decision a voice, and I have conducted multiple interviews and made many other attempts to contact sources who might have a stake in this decision. I am eager and hopeful that still others will want to share their stories.

As I stated Monday, it is my hope that our request for documents pertaining to the decision to stop some of the distribution of the Pirate Press will indicate a misunderstanding among one or more administrators, a clear course of action for the future and resounding support for the students involved in the journalism program at Boonville High School.

As you will read in today's paper, Pirate Press editor-in-chief Emily Voss filed a similar request for information before the BDN.

The response Voss received from the district stated, in part: "There are no District records responsive to your request."

In filing a Sunshine request of my own, I sought to obtain a copy of the protocol for administrative review of the paper, a protocol that Superintendent Mark Ficken on Oct. 2 said had existed for three or four years.

In order to function, businesses and entities such as newspapers — be they overseen by corporations or by the Boonville School Board — rely on written directives and goals.

Ficken told the BDN that the Pirate Press will continue to function provided that school officials follow protocol. Therefore, it stands to reason that such a protocol should be readily available for presentation to the staff of the student newspaper.

Voss told the BDN for the article in today's paper that students are upset and have been confused by the distribution decision.

Williams also wrote in his creed: "I believe that suppression of the news, for any consideration other than the welfare of society, is indefensible."

To not cover the decision to stop distribution of some issues of the Pirate Press would violate that statement, one made by a person with far more experience in the field of journalism than myself.

What kind of example would any other decision set for these students?

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