

GUEST OPINION

Public should have easier access to town records

By Everett German

There are always two sides to every story. Perhaps it would do the town chairwoman well to remember that and listen more often. Yes, the 6,000 emails – 6 months' worth (16,000 pages) – are sitting at the Town Hall for me to review. Due to the problems that I have had with Ms. Van Scyoc, both with her attitude and resistance to everything I ask for, I did hire a lawyer at my expense to handle this in an expedient manner. I am an elected representative just as she is.

The agreement between us was that the emails were to be date stamped, which is numerical stamping of each and every email and that I would initiate the review of the emails and designate the specific emails I would like copied to limit the expense to the town. The agreed upon cost was \$300, which I paid. The said emails were not stamped or numbered. The original schedule of which I could review said emails was 12 hours the first week and 16 hours the second week. At this rate it would take approximately 4.5 months to view 16,000 pages. This was not acceptable to me as I wanted to go in on a daily basis until completed.

Ms. Van Scyoc finally agreed that I could come in every day. On Feb. 18, I went into the Town Hall. At that time Ms. Van Scyoc informed me that she hired someone to sit with me. I asked Ms. Van Scyoc what this would cost the town taxpayers. She would not tell me but told me his name was Dave. She also informed me repeatedly that I was disrupting the office. No, I could not accept that cost to the town so in return I gave the town another check for \$3,700 per the town attorney. This request started at \$300 then I was told \$1,200, now \$4,000. It would appear to me that the cost keeps going up. Perhaps this is Ms. Van Scyoc's attempt to deter me from viewing said emails.

There have been numerous statements and figures thrown out by Chairwoman Van Scyoc that I wonder if she remembers.

To address the false accusation and the additional cost to the town taxpayers, I have asked town Supervisor Brian Fischer to pick up and view the emails on my behalf and at no additional cost to the town. Supervisor Fischer has requested and been refused access to same town records.

Chairwoman Van Scyoc's statement in The Freeman guest opinion on Feb. 22: "Supervisor German has released sensitive documents and information in the past and thereby proven himself incapable of respecting safeguards which protect the Town of Waukesha."

Really, Ms. Van Scyoc, I released my emails, for which I was custodian, from an open records request by The Freeman. In other words, I complied with the law. Period. I also complied with Ms. Van Scyoc's open records request on those same emails at no charge to the town.

Bottom line: I have always believed that if there is nothing to hide, information should be easy to access. I have always believed in open, honest and accessible government.

These are public documents. I have bought and paid for these copies; they are my property. Redaction is no longer an option.

(Everett German is a Town of Waukesha supervisor.)



German