

Randy Wertz, General Registrar, County of Montgomery recently generated an email. In this, he alludes to some conspiracy to either unseat elected officials or to attack his office. What was not said is that mistakes were made. Only candidates who were or would have been affected had the right to challenge an election and get anyone removed from the ballot or a vote overturned. That did not occur. Yet, Mr. Wertz has implied this was due to a certain campaign trying to influence the election with collusion by local media. Again, other untruths.

The same person who obtained copies of these document in 2008 asked for them in 2010, and will ask for those documents in future elections related to Christiansburg. It was me, Carol Lindstrom. I asked for them again because I had noted some errors in the 2008 copies. Those are public documents and may be obtained by anyone.

I suppose I could have treated them like every other public document I have received and posted them on my website, but I chose not to do so because I did not feel it was right to publish the names of those who signed these documents (particularly with SS#'s being visible). I obtained them because I had obtained them previously, as I have made FOIA requests for many documents relative to local or state government since 2007. Various individuals expressed a desire to see them.

I initially reviewed the documents, noted that some of the signatures had been obtained earlier than the law allowed, and like any other citizen can, I used internet resources to verify addresses through the County GIS system. The results showed me that all candidates had enough (in some cases, just barely enough) to qualify for the ballot. The reason that I went through the list in the first place was because, for each candidate, there were several pages of signatures that had not been checked. It was only the 125 needed that were evaluated at the Registrar's Office. Once the 125 was reached, verification stopped. There was no safety cushion in the event that any signatures were challenged.

Now, I found myself with a dilemma. Should I, someone who has made a point of addressing issues at the Town level, simply be silent when such errors were found? I chose to contact the Roanoke Times concerning the issues pertaining to early collection of signatures, leaving it up to someone else to check my data. At the time I notified the Roanoke Times, I knew from my own research that each candidate had just enough valid signatures to be on the ballot.

Then, I set the documents aside and had them available for any citizen to look at with the understanding these were just copies and that any questions would need to be addressed through the original documents at the Registrar's Office. Other people did look and found a lot of things that I hadn't noticed. These weren't issues that would be likely to change any outcome of elections, but did point to some issues which should probably be addressed. I understand other trips were made to the Registrar's Office and official documents were viewed. All of these were steps that ANY citizen has the right to take.

Mr. Wertz's email now gives the appearance of being a smoke screen trying to keep the major issues from being addressed. Mistakes were made. These types of mistakes could have changed the outcome of current elections or past elections. If allowed to continue, this could affect future elections as well.

This isn't an issue of trying to unseat candidates elected by the people in challenged elections. It is an issue of citizens having the right to raise questions and get answers. If citizens find problems, they should be confident those in power will work to identify and correct issues. Regardless of how much blame placing and finger pointing occurs, the issue remains: "Will the problems be acknowledged and addressed."

Had Mr. Wertz simply called me and asked about this, he would have gotten the same information contained here. Instead, he chose to attack people/agencies with innuendos and false allegations. Prior to the dissemination of this email, I would have thought that all of this was possibly a function of the County having reduced the funding/staffing to the Registrar's Office. Obviously, Mr. Wertz believes it is something entirely different.

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