

Armed, Anonymous, and Unaccountable

In April, the Press ignored documentation showing the City of Mahtomedi failed to enforce its contracts and ordinances, instead catering to various special interest groups while leaving much of the truth on the cutting room floor. Former editor Neutkens' ~~biased~~ data practices story unfairly represented the situation. ~~This was underpinned by Loretta Harding's own landowner consent for hunting, after years of writing about deer eating flowers.~~ Was ^{is} this ethical, unbiased coverage?

Loretta Harding has written for years about deer eating flowers.

It's chilling when newspapers are used to cudgel and silence civic engagement and government accountability.

I requested data to examine Mahtomedi's deer management. The names of hunters became a specific focus when it became clear that Mahtomedi—against the terms of its contract—didn't have forms, names, or certificates of liability insurance. Are you comfortable with the city not knowing the legal identities of contracted “sharpshooters?”

Rep. Becker-Finn's care to make names of armed government workers anonymous belies her legislation to make more police data public. Apparently, she cares if hunters quit culling but not when officers quit protecting? Especially concerning, the council tried to block this public information and Metro Bowhunters (who “aren't trophy hunters”) tried to classify their services as “recreational.” They've said they “follow all game laws.” Eight months later, they still have not provided nonprofit public disclosures—an IRS inspection requirement.

Requests showed substantial problems with Mahtomedi's records management. In November, the city ~~claim~~ falsely stated liability waivers were previously provided. Other data was incomplete and inconsistent. The city didn't research anything beyond hunting, which studies show is an ineffective long-term strategy. There were no reports of CWD testing, proof of sharpshooting certification, venison donations to the needy, or natural ecological damage caused by deer—just complaints about nibbled landscaping. There was misinformation about deer and Lyme's disease, and abysmal enforcement of deer feeders when Parks Director Goebel said there were too many to count, some hundreds of pounds in size.

Stevens Point's culling program provides complete transparency. What about Mahtomedi?

Published, detailed reports of these failures are on my website. Citizens should be wary that the Press prints the full truth.

Ask for accountability.