

Attacking citizen who criticized White Township wasn't constructive contribution

• June 22, 2022



A White Township' official is back to his favorite pastime: disparaging citizens who point out the township's shortcomings — only this time it's in a letter to the editor about deer hunting in White's Woods.

First, the facts. Searching "White Township deer management" did produce 29 articles. However, only 10 made reference to the township collecting public input; the others included such topics as the ordinance banning hunting, the use of deer enclosure fencing, letters opposing hunting, and even another letter (Lenz, July 17, 2021) which attacked a writer who opposed hunting (Sheldon, July 12, 2021).

Yes, the township did, on occasion, "encourage and accept input from ... stakeholders of White Township's resources." But did that input result in modifications? Of 32 contacts the township shared in a response to an open records request (received Sept. 29, 2021), 20 opposed hunting and four more expressed serious reservations. How did these influence the plan?

Perhaps more to the point, the only public meeting held was the "open house," where "experts" were available at separate tables to answer questions. The township declined to have a public discussion, claiming that they had been advised by the Game Commission that such meetings were hard to control.

Now, let's consider responsibility. Had they done their due diligence, the township would know that although Sara Stewart is new to the township, she is not new to the Indiana community, having served on the borough council from 2018-21. She even attended a township meeting (Dec. 5, 2019) to ask for clarification about hunting in White's Woods.

They would also know that she's a nationally recognized journalist who regularly contributes to the New York Post, CNN and the Huffington Post, among others. These esteemed news outlets would not accept her work were it not well researched. The township would also know this is not Stewart's first letter to the Gazette about White's Woods (July 22, 2020).

The township is right: Lack of responsibility undermines credibility. However, their attack on a citizen who criticizes their behavior can hardly be characterized as a constructive contribution, although it has become a pattern (Lady, July 9, 2021; Lenz, Aug. 17, 2021; Sept. 25, 2021).

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