

**John C. Ackerman**

Tazewell County Board

*Continuing a Family Tradition of Community Service*

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**\*\*\* Press Release \*\*\***

## **Response to Irresponsible and Un-substantiated allegations from County Board Member Mike Harris**

At last month's Tazewell County Board Meeting, fellow Board Member Mike Harris read a prepared statement in which he made allegations against me concerning a phone call he reportedly received from an unnamed employee. These allegations are: A) Intimidation of an Employee, B) Misrepresentation of the Tazewell County Board, and C) Violation of the Chain of Command.

After last month's meeting, I asked Member Harris to provide any factual or documented evidence to back-up these allegations before tonight's meeting. Out of respect for him as a fellow County Board Member, I have not addressed these allegations publicly during this past month so that he could bring forth this information. At that time and to date, he has not.

While in the Justice System allegations without factual substantiating evidence are dismissed as individuals are innocent until proven guilty, over the years I have come to find that in Politics this is sadly not the case. As such, I will address these serious allegations tonight. And please do recognize that these are very serious allegations to be made at a public meeting against an individual with providing any substantiating evidence.

As to the first two allegations, Intimidation of an Employee and Misrepresentation of the Tazewell County Board, without any factual evidence to reference, I cannot answer the allegations in any other way than to say that I do not recall any event in which these claims can be true. I have never been approached by any employee or employee's supervisor or the County Administrator with any complaint or rumor of such complaint that could substantiate Member Harris's allegations.

I find it irresponsible and unprofessional for a fellow County Board Member to bring such serious allegations to the attention of not only the County Board but the media and, most importantly, the public without first getting substantiating evidence to back-up the claims. If he had time enough to prepare a statement, he should have also taken the time to gather the necessary factual evidence.

Until which time Member Harris can provide such evidence as to support his allegations, I dismiss them and state to the citizens that I have no knowledge of the source or reason for his claims. It should also be noted that if any employee had felt intimidated by anyone, let alone a County Board Member, we

have a process in place in which they can approach their supervisor and/or the County Administrator to report the situation. As no supervisor has come forward and the County administrator has not received any such report, I feel this evidence speaks volumes itself.

As far as the allegation of Violation of the Chain of Command, I think this one needs to be reviewed. I have reviewed the County Board Rules which govern this organization and find no reference to such a system. I have found that if such a system would exist, it would be against the very nature of this organization in which all members are equals. The claim that more responsibility or command of the organization or availability of information is granted through backroom, insider oriented, politically motivated appointments to Committee Positions is completely frivolous.

The only individuals that can grant any type of power to a County Board Member are the citizens that do so when they elect us. Some could state that the size of their support for an individual is a barometer as to the quality of representation they receive from those individuals they elect. It should be noted that this barometer of quality of representation is no way reflected in these politically motivated Committee appointments.

While Member Harris is not the only individual to express this idea of Chain of Command, he is the latest individual to incorrectly do so. As a former Committee Chairmen himself for several years he should know that we are all equals in terms of responsibility for the actions of this organization.

Not all County Board Members are equal in terms of quality of representation, service to the citizens and ability to perform the duties they are elected to perform, but that is a decision for the citizens to make each time they go to the voters booth. After the election, the citizens expect us to come together to discuss the issues of the day and do what is best for Tazewell County.

Stunts like last months, which provide no benefit to the task at hand unless factual substantiating evidence is found, deter from that service to those that have entrusted us and given us this responsibility.

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