

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

P. O. BOX 2160
SPOKANE, WA 99210-1615

Steven A. Smith
Editor

January 4, 2006

Tim Connor
1016 S. Buena Vista Dr.
Spokane, WA 99224

Dear Tim:

I received your packet of materials yesterday and will wade through it all eventually. I responded with a quick e-mail, but the address may be old, so I'm not sure you received it.

I did want to answer your central question regarding an independent audit.

The RPS cases were resolved in the spring just about the time the Mayor West story broke. I was of the view, and remain so, that questions relating to the timing of the West investigation and its relationship to the RPS cases constitutes the bookend to the RPS saga and that questions about that relationship should make up the last set of questions to be reviewed in an audit.

I sought out two potential auditors before the close of May but could not reach a deal (money issues and timing).

I began talking to officials of the Washington News Council in June and made a formal request in late summer that they conduct the audit. They indicated they were interested, but asked to delay a final decision until this month because they were involved in a national grant program to help establish other news councils in other states and so were too busy to take on this project.

I expect their board will approve this effort; hopefully this month. I have no idea how long the review will take; it is new ground for us and the WNC.

The WNC is an independent organization that adjudicates press complaints. The Spokesman-Review is not a member of it in large part because I have quite mixed feelings about their effectiveness. Yet this audit is a different animal and I think they're well positioned to undertake the effort. The WNC board is made up of academics, ethicists, business people, jurists and some news professionals. The executive director is John Hamer, a former editorial writer for The Seattle Times and an outspoken press critic.

If, for some reason, the WNC denies my request, then I'll have to pursue option "d." But I have every intention of following through on this pledge.

Please understand, I'm asking for a review of our journalism, not a re-report on RPS. I'm not hiring an independent journalist for that purpose—that's the role you have chosen to play.

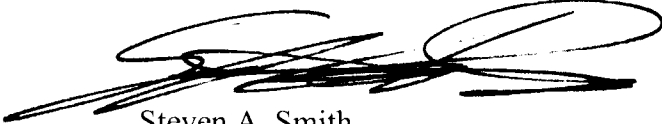
This study will not conclude whether or not RPS was good or bad for the community, whether the financing schemes were good or bad. It will look at whether or not we did our job as a news organization. I believe there is value in that.

Tim Connor
January 4, 2006
Page 2

Meanwhile, FYI, the News Council is hosting an independent forum on our Mayor West coverage for early February at Whitworth. I've agreed to participate, but have no idea who else might be on the program or what format will be chosen.

Thank you for your letter and attachments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven A. Smith". The signature is stylized with several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steven A. Smith
Editor