



Satirical page administrators say "Civic Involvement" goal of Wood River tattoo trolling

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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WOOD RIVER - By now, the confusion regarding a satire site's article about tattoo bans in Wood River should be over.

Of course, the entire story, which claimed the City of Wood River was going to ban exposed in public, was "fake news," being perpetuated by a satirical site called "Wood River City Council." Page administrators said the site had a goal of civic involvement following the closure of the Wood River Aquatic Center over what Wood River Mayor Cheryl Maguire said was a lack of city funds. The administrators of the Wood River City Council satire page - who have requested anonymity - said the park was partially closed due to Mayor Maguire not allocating TIF funding toward it.

"I have a real problem with their anonymity," Maguire said. "Because, they put things out to the public behind the cloak of being anonymous. If they wanted to increase civic involvement, they could call someone and ask how they could affect that particular area in the city."

Maguire did admit TIF funding could have assisted and paid for safety issues at the Aquatic Center, but those funds would have to have been allocated more than a year ago in order to make a difference this year. When asked why those funds were not allocated

for improvements at the city's iconic water park, Maguire said the person who was in charge of that was no longer involved in the city.

"It's not my goal to cast stones," she said when asked whose responsibility that allocation was. "I just want to move Wood River ahead to the future."

After the satirical piece about the tattoo ban was published, the administrators of the page said they received 65,000 unique visitors and 250,000 hits on their page. Maguire said her office, and several other city departments, was inundated with calls and emails regarding the absurdity of such a ban. Maguire said such a thing would never be considered under her administration, and the administrators said they had no idea people would not get the joke.

"I'm somewhat surprised," they said. "I figured some people wouldn't get it, but we made the site crappy on purpose in the hope that people would know it's fake."

That tattoo ban idea originated from another satirical site called "Ban Tattoos Now," which once featured a graphic comparing tattooed parents to Hurricane Irma.

Once the administrators realized the joke did not bring awareness to their original goal of increased civic activity among Wood River residents, they removed the articles and have replaced them with a [video](#) on their website apologizing to Wood River administration and readers and explaining their satirical stance.

"It was simply an idea between me and another individual," the administrator said. "We literally had the site up and running within an hour. We just wanted to make a satire website and send it to some of our mutual friends as a gag, but it kind of took off. Ultimately, we saw a cover-up happening in Wood River, and we just wanted to utilize our First Amendment rights harnessing the power of satire to question the city government and give our community some laughs."

That "cover-up" the administrators cited was the closure of the Aquatic Center following what they believed to be the misuse of TIF funds.

"Additionally, if anything, this creates awareness for citizens to get more involved in local government," the administrator continued. "Voter turnout in Wood River is awful, and most of the people have zero clue what is going on. Originally it didn't start as that, we just wanted it to be a prank, but when we started writing the articles, we saw how this is a great platform to get individuals interested in civics."

"We were incredibly surprised how many people didn't get the satire. We thought these articles were so bizarre that no one would believe them. No tattoos allowed in Wood River? How could anyone possibly believe that? We were shocked, needless to say."