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December 17, 2018

Dear Mr. Kopycinski:

It has come to my attention that you recently wrote several articles in which you report incorrect information regarding Park Forest-Chicago Heights School District 163. Having reviewed the articles, I am certain that you want to be viewed as a serious journalist, while setting examples regarding fairness and accuracy for the students you teach. Therefore, I am providing this response on behalf of the Board of Education as containing some suggestions to improve your craft.

First, you reported that Park Forest-Chicago Heights School District 163 has two Superintendents. That is simply not true. Dr. Carmine is the Interim Superintendent; Dr. White is the Superintendent-Designate. The primary reason behind this administrative structure is to allow the Superintendent-Designate to confidently transition into her role of Superintendent at the start of the 2019/2020 school year. Given the fact that the Interim Superintendent has served the School District for nearly two decades, she possesses priceless institutional knowledge to aid the Superintendent-Designate to succeed in that transition. Moreover, the Interim Superintendent's retirement in the summer of 2017 came at a time when the School District was undergoing various construction projects, changing its curriculum and administration structure, and beginning negotiations for a successor collective bargaining agreement for teachers and support staff. Therefore, the Board of Education felt it was best to keep Dr. Carmine on staff as the Interim Superintendent in order to assure that those major projects were sufficiently concluded.

Second, you reported that the Village of Park Forest is lowering its tax levy, while the School District is increasing its tax levy. This is also incorrect. Although the School District's levy has increased, the Board of Education will be applying to the Illinois State Board of Education for a tax relief grant that will actually abate taxes due to the School District. The application will be sent to the State Board of Education in January, 2019, and we are expecting the application to be approved in March, 2019. We are confident the application will be approved based on the School District's place in the priority list for this grant.

Gary Kopycinski
December 17, 2018
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Third, in the second paragraph of your November 21, 2018 article, you misspelled the Interim Superintendent's last name. Proofreading is a pillar of good writing style and will lead to your ability to be taken seriously.

Lastly, and what is most troubling about your recent articles, is that you never sought to interview or seek information from anyone at the School District before writing them. Yet another cornerstone of good journalism is attempting to glean information from the subject of your story. Provided that you adhere to the Board of Education's policies and procedures regarding media relations, I would be happy to do whatever is possible to assist you to publishing accurate information. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Very truly yours,

SCARIANO, HIMES AND PETRARCA, CHTD.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Justino Petrarca'.

JUSTINO D. PETRARCA

JDP/emm

cc: Mr. Lance Jefferson, Board President
Dr. Joyce Carmine, Interim Superintendent