

Good investigative reports aired on St. Louis TV stations

Elliott Davis brought viewers an effective "You Paid For It" this past week as he produced a story (<http://fox2now.com/2013/11/13/expensive-deal-costing-st-charles-county-taxpayers-millions/>) on what appears to be an inconsistency in how St. Charles County does business. He pointed out that a recent \$5 million plus project had only one bid submitted.

Davis went after St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann to ask him why the county did not put the bid out again hoping for more bids to potentially lower the cost. Ehlmann responded that it fell within the expected cost range. Then it was clear that Davis did his homework.

He asked Ehlmann why it was okay this time but not last year, when only one bid came in to buy new voting equipment. Ehlmann did not answer the question, instead saying the County Council okayed it.

Davis did a good job of showing contradictory behavior on the part of a politician. It would have been nice for Davis to dig further on what was behind the difference. Did the company that won the bid make significant campaign contributions to Ehlmann or did the company bidding on the voting equipment not contribute?

He also might have been more direct with questions about why he supported the one bid this time and not last time, and not let Ehlmann shift blame to the council.

Channel 5's Leisa Zigman did a relatively good job on a story Wednesday, Nov. 13 (<http://www.ksdk.com/story/news/local/2013/11/14/normandy-school-district-secret/3521871/>), about secret settlements made by the unaccredited, financially-strapped Normandy school district after students were hurt by security guards at the school.

She pointed out that in one previously secret settlement in which the district paid \$1,785,000 to a victim, it still denied the security guard did anything wrong.

The story noted this wasn't the only settlement involving the same guard. Yet the guard is still employed at the district. Her narration leading into the first part of her interview with Superintendent Ty McNichols noted he "stands by his guards." But viewers never heard anything specifically about this, especially concerning the guard involved in two incidents and why he was still working there.

Instead, after the guard-related introduction, we hear her ask on camera, "People have said there was a culture of secrecy here. Do you feel that culture still exists?" McNichols response was, "I think the fact that I've been more open to the media in the last four months reflects that we're not trying to hide anything."

He went on to say he wanted to return Normandy to its position of being a premier district in the region. She should have asked directly why the guard involved in two separate settlements made by Normandy was still working. She didn't.

Zigman also missed the mark on secrecy. After asking if there were more settlements besides the one she knew about, she said McNichols said "no." That was not true as Zigman pointed out she discovered more settlements. But she never confronted McNichols directly as to why, given his talk about openness, he was not being open and did not tell her about the other

cases.

In both cases, the stories were good but could have been even better with some more direct questions.

Here is a reminder to reporters:

Sunday morning's KMOX radio weekly "Wall Street Wrap," was confusing. The spokesman from Stifel used a lot of jargon average people won't understand. For example, he talked about "top line growth." But he is not solely to blame. Interviewer Carol Daniel has to represent her listeners. After he talked about "top line growth" as well as some of the other terms, it is incumbent on her to ask him what he means.