

## **Open letter to MWB Community from President of MWB**

**December 13, 2018**

Dear MWB community,

I have been trying to figure out how to respond personally to the recording and also to the board's decision on why the accuser of the incident in question was removed. I am saddened that this has been twisted around. I am frustrated that our Principal's Office (PO) was not able to investigate this due to police involvement. I feel I have to write something to respond to all of this and have been trying to come up with the words to best reflect me and my love of the MWB community. I am trying to be strong and not defensive or hurt. I have had many community members reach out to me privately. People who know me, my character and know what it's like to be in leadership seem to see through the accusations and the hateful remarks being thrown our way. We have spent an incredible amount of time to maintain this board. The Board was never contacted by the police. We only removed these individuals both temporarily due to the altercation in an effort to protect the organization while the PO/police did their part knowing that one board member had filed a hate crime charge against another board member. We were informed the sheriff had made a visit to Elderberry. We let the police and PO handle it. We remained hands off. However, once that temporary removal was enacted the board member who filed the hate crime charge then refused to hand over any passwords to our g-suite and website. I asked him politely twice and he refused to transfer MWB access to these things. He responded uncooperatively (have emails of this). It was only through past MWB members access that MWB board was able to regain access and change passwords after I personally spent many hours of calls to G-Suite etc. Our EC's for InterFuse were needing their emails set up, their information on the website, we needed to share budget files, accounting documents – we could do nothing while he held these MWB passwords. He also insulted the board publicly and violated confidentiality in attempt to smear MWB falsely in an effort to hurt the very organization the community had entrusted him to protect and ensure the livelihood of.

I think it important to explain that the accuser was only removed based on his behavior and attempts to sabotage the board following his temporary removal and that if he had not acted in that way both he and the accused would have been reinstated. There was no recommendation brought by the PO. There was no recommendation by the EC's. There was one sober witness, a ranger who stated they saw no physical contact made between the two individuals, only yelling. The accused was reinstated by the remaining board members myself excluded after their discussion. I also think it's important for people to understand that investigating the incident and having some type of proof needs to happen before really any action could be taken. Previous rape allegations etc. have had the same issue. The board is not a judge nor a jury. Investigation and truth seeking falls under the PO and once the police became involved the PO had to step back. We understood that the police did not find enough evidence to send any report to

the prosecution. The PO lead informed the accuser once he involved police the PO would cease their involvement. The PO lead has his confirmation that he was made aware of this and that he accepted that. I don't like my words of "we know you were assaulted" as they were stated from a stance of we know about your claim of assault. I realize now to never tell someone that has potential to have been assaulted..."I know you think you were assaulted". When someone is telling you something that happened you validate them. I was not admitting guilt....but was being sensitive to the accuser's feelings before I had gathered information...and did in fact remove myself to be impartial and let the PO and then law enforcement do their job.

These statements were made only days after the event and I had several conversations with the accuser on the matter. I also did say we had to wait until PO investigated in that same conversation.

I want to be very clear on this fact. I recused myself from the entire process as soon as that recorded conversation ended to avoid the potential conflict of interest. I did not feel right after that conversation. I felt baited and felt the accuser was going after something and I needed to turn this over the remaining board. I suggested I could look into insurance but we would still need the PO to do their investigation before going forward with anything. I was trying to be a friend to the accuser while trying to balance my board role. I have screenshots of my texts to the accuser days after the event that I must step away and not try to sway him. I have a detailed document of all the conversations via text and email between the accuser and myself and they show my recusal and non-involvement clearly. Why was the accuser removed? It is stated above why that decision was made and it is not because of the incident in question. Why was the accused not permanently removed? The board could not take action based on accusation not corroborated as has been the board stance for years. Our actions are in direct opposition to the claims of corruption. No secret meetings occurred. I am the one who posted the minutes. The board's policy is to omit names of people being discussed in meetings from public board minutes to protect the privacy of those involved in any given incident. Members of the Board and I are working hard to continue to ensure the Association is compliant with 501c3 requirements. Regardless of accusations of the state of the Association, we are diligent in our actions pertaining to the offices you have elected us in.

Allegations asserting the Board's failure to comply with IRS requirements are false. I can produce the letter from the IRS that states the complete opposite. I am happy to share anything you want. I believe in transparency. I believe in Midwest Burners. I believe in fairness and truth. I do not believe in witch hunts, sabotage and chasing accusations presented without proof. I feel that one very angry and hurt individual is acting to burn the whole thing down. We have two individuals involved in an altercation. They both agree that yelling occurred. Your board did the best they could with no proof of physical assault and had to act on accusation only. Yes – we made a mistake in not disclosing this to the community sooner. Yes we acted based on what we felt was best

for the organization. I feel for everyone on the board and in the community that we love that is participating in and observing this all happen.

The bottom line is it was escalated to law enforcement who has not at this time found the accused prosecutable. So MWB cannot take matters into their own hands. Should one member's word be taken over another? Of course not. That leaves us to "no action". However the accuser and also board member holding passwords and attempting to dismantle the organization before any decision had been made on the other hand is our business and should be disclosed. I am willing to discuss further these things through my email at **president@midwestburners.org** and welcome questions from community members.

Yours honestly and respectfully,

~ Lizzie