

Independent Ethics Commission – Formal Complaint Form

Before the Independent Ethics Commission
of the State of Colorado

For Commission Use Only

Received date: 31-Dec-2020

Case. No.: 20-76

The Complainant is: Jordan Hedberg
(name)

Mailing Address: PO BOX 861
Westcliffe, Colorado 81252

Daytime telephone number: 719-371-3482

Email address: editor@WetMountainTribune.com

The Respondent is: Clifford Brown
(name)

Mailing Address: PO BOX 1324
Westcliffe, Colorado 81252

Daytime telephone number: 719-783-3369

Email address: clifford@custercountygov.com

When did the alleged violation occur: September 30, 2020

Describe the specific acts or things complained of, with facts that provide a full understanding of the alleged violation(s). If possible, cite the specific ethical standards alleged to have been violated and describe how the violation(s) occurred. Use additional pages if necessary. Attach any documentary evidence you wish to submit.

On September 30, 2020 Clifford Brown, Public Health Director for Custer County, presented to the Custer County Board of Health fake transcripts and a fake Diploma from a criminal and illegal online diploma mill called "Dartley University." Dartley University is a known Diploma Mill and has been subject to FBI investigation in the past.

When Brown knowingly presented his fake academic credentials for a Master in Public Health, he committed a class-two forgery which is a class-one misdemeanor in Colorado.

Since that time the Wet Mountain Tribune Newspaper, owned by the Complainant, has continued its investigation into Clifford Brown and his fake Master in Public Health.

Description of acts or things complained of (continued):

Brown was hired in July of 2020 during the COVID-19 Pandemic using on his resume the fake Master in Public Health. Brown only has a Doctorate in Optometry and is unqualified to direct Public Health Resources during the COVID-19 Pandemic. He has repeatedly stated on the Public Record that he attended Dartley University and took classes. However, this statement is a lie. There never has been a Dartley University. Brown paid a criminal organization in trade for a fake diploma and fake transcripts from a fake University.

Through Brown's deception he has placed the lives of Citizens in Custer County at increased risk due to his lack of education and experience directing Public Health Resources.

Clifford Brown has broken the trust of the public as a Colorado State Public Health Official through his repeated lie regarding Dartley University.

Attached is the Wet Mountain Tribune's Story on the matter. Brown's Public Statement took place on December 14, 2020 during a special Custer County Board of Health meeting that he attended Dartley and took classes.

In closing, Dartley University has never existed and was involved in the criminal business of selling fake diplomas and fake transcripts. The documents Brown presented to the Board of Health during an executive session on September 30 are forgeries meant to deceive Elected Officials of Custer County, and to deceive the people of Custer County. Brown undertook this deception for the private financial gain of a government paycheck and the benefits that come with the job. It is estimated that his salary plus benefits amounts to \$70,000 a year.

Advisement regarding remedies and penalties: Pursuant to Colo. Const. art. XXIX, § 6, a covered individual found to have breached the public trust for private gain is liable for double the amount of the financial equivalent of any benefits obtained by such actions. The manner of recovery and additional penalties may be provided by law. The Commission does not assess criminal penalties, award injunctive relief, or award damages to complainants.

I hereby acknowledge that the facts presented herein are true to the best of my knowledge, and I will cooperate in the process regarding this complaint and will appear at any proceeding of the Independent Ethics Commission if the complaint is scheduled for a hearing.

Signature: Jordan Hedberg

Attorney (if applicable): _____

Dated at Westcliffe (City), Colorado, this 31 day of December, 2020.

Created by Article XXIX of the Colorado Constitution, the Independent Ethics Commission may review and hold hearings on matters falling within its jurisdiction as outlined in Article XXIX.



SNOTEL reading above average Road construction finishes on 69

The snowfall across the Valley this last week, and the flurries that are predicted for tomorrow, bode well for the probability of “a white Christmas.” According to Pueblo-based National Weather Service (NWS) meteorologist Klint Skelly, Tuesday’s accumulation on an already preserved snowpack will most likely stay on the ground, at least into Christmas week. In answer to our annual question regarding the Christmas scenario, Skelly said, “After Friday’s snow though, we enter a drier period, but with temperatures topping out in the low 40s and high 30s, this will be a slow melt, so with what you have now, yeah, it seems likely a white Christmas is in store.”

While that is welcome news and forecast in the immediacy of the winter holidays, the longer range view is not so promising. The current outlook for the next three months of winter, Skelly suggests, indicates “we are not favorable for a lot of snow.” He cited the NWS Climate Prediction Center, which projects our area into continuing drought, less than normal precipitation, and warmer temperatures well into 2021.

Again though, the immediate view of the high Sangres peaks confirms what SNOTEL was reporting at the South Colony station on Tuesday: an increase of 14 inches in snow depth for seasonal highs of 42 inches with 9.2 inches of water equivalency.

To put that into perspective, on this same date in 2019, the water equivalency within the accumulated snow was 7.4 inches, and in 2018, 5.3 inches. In the months ahead the SNOTEL readings will let us know if the promise of a decent spring runoff will be maintained. Right now the readings hold well above the 30 year average of 6.8 inches for this date. However, in spite of the immediate and favorable readings, the Natural Resources Conservation Services projects Grape Creek to run only at two-thirds of normal next spring.

As always, the Valley waits, works, watches, and will farm and ranch accordingly. In the meantime, we can sing along with Bing—the late Crosby that is, not the search engine—in the hopes that our “dreaming of a white Christmas” will be rewarded with reality this odd and challenging year.

– W.A. Ewing

Crews resurfaced the highway and added safety features to maximize driver safety

The Colorado Department of Transportation and contractor A&S Construction have completed an asphalt resurfacing and overlay project on Colorado Highway 69 in Custer County. Crews resurfaced 12.88 miles of CO 69 from Westcliffe to Hillside with a 2 to 2.5-inch overlay of new asphalt, made critical bridge repairs, reclaimed a section of roadway between two bridges, and made safety improvements. Other work included milling, paving and striping a quarter mile section of CO 96 at the CO 69 intersection and adding bike lanes in the Town of Westcliffe. The project supports CDOT’s commitment to improved statewide mobility and their Whole System Whole Safety initiative.

This federal aid project was designed to provide needed repairs and upgrades to a well-traveled section of CO 69, and improve driver safety.

Work entailed asphalt resurfacing and overlay, full depth reclamation of the pavement between two bridges, bridge deck repairs and waterproofing, and adding signs and safety measures such as delineators, roadway striping and new guardrail. Other work included milling, paving, restriping, and adding bike lanes on a quarter mile stretch of Main Street (CO 96) in the Town of Westcliffe. The project lasted five months with minimal impacts to traffic and local businesses.

– Press release from Colorado Department of Transportation



Christmas play goes on the radio

The Westcliffe Center for the Performing Arts (WCPA) has for many years featured a Christmas-themed movie in the Jones Theater as a community event for the holiday season. This year, because of COVID-19 restrictions, the Jones Theater will still be dark. However, in the tradition of “the show must go on,” the WCPA Players will be turning their hands, hearts, and voices to a different sort of event for the holiday season: an adaptation for radio of John Arden’s *The Business of Good Government: A Christmas Play*, in conjunction with community radio station KLZR-FM. The play will be airing twice on KLZR: first at 8 p.m. on Christmas Eve, December 24, and then again on Christmas Day, December 25, at 6 p.m.

The idea for a radio play sprang originally as a proposal to the WCPA from the creative duo of Gary Taylor and T.C. Smythe who, in addition to their musical act, also produce and engineer shows for KLZR. The *Tribune’s* Elliot Jackson, who is also the program manager for the WCPA, decided to go with an adaptation of the Arden play rather than a play written specifically for radio, and with Taylor and Smythe set out to recruit a performance and production team.

John Arden (1930-2012) formed part of the “Angry Young Man” generation of British playwrights of the 1950s and 1960s exemplified by John Osborne, whose 1956 play *Look Back in Anger*, which was later made into a movie

~continued on page 4~

Public Health Director not qualified Board of Health fails to independently investigate Brown’s resume

The Custer County Board of Health (BOH) held a special meeting Monday to address the *Tribune’s* questions regarding Public Health Director Clifford Brown’s Master’s in Public Health from Dartley University that he supposedly earned in 2008. The BOH members had been included on every email sent to Brown, but the board failed to respond for several weeks. A response only took place after the *Tribune* printed last week’s article questioning Brown’s qualifications. The BOH Press release is printed on page 12 of this edition.

The BOH meeting and press release revealed four important facts for the *Tribune’s* ongoing investigation which is explained in further detail below:

1. That Brown does not hold a valid Master’s in Public Health.
2. The BOH did not, and has not, independently verified any of Browns’ resume.
3. Brown likely committed a class two forgery which is a class one misdemeanor (one step below felony) in Colorado.
4. Brown is not qualified to be the Public Health Director.

Point one is the simplest. Since Dartley University does not and never has existed, Brown does not have a bonified Master’s in Public Health. Brown admitted to

the BOH that he never checked to see if Dartley was accredited when he supposedly took online only classes from 2006 to 2008. In addition, Brown admitted in an email sent to Clint Smith that he has not been able to contact Dartley in at least nine years. Before the BOH voted on submitting a press release to the *Tribune*, Commissioner Jay Printz asked Brown to state on the record that he had attended Dartley University and had taken classes. Brown affirmed both questions.

Point number two can be understood from what the BOH has not done in vetting Brown. According to the Press Release sent by the BOH to the *Tribune*, the question of Dartley University was brought up before. However, instead of having Brown send sealed transcripts or trying to verify Brown’s degree through the Student Clearing House system, the BOH simply examined a copy of a diploma and a copy of transcripts that were provided by Brown himself. Official diplomas and transcripts come with a seal from the college and are signed by university personnel, usually by the president of the institution. Brown’s copies of a diploma and transcripts cannot be considered official or proof that Dartley exists.

Point number three is a serious accusation. When Brown showed the BOH the copy of the diploma and transcripts, he was knowingly using forged documents

which is a crime in Colorado. Since Dartley University has never existed, the documents in Brown’s possession are fraudulent, and using them to secure a job is considered a class two forgery and is a class one misdemeanor.

The last point stems from the BOH’s misunderstanding of the Colorado statues that qualify a Public Health Director. The BOH states in their press release that Brown’s Master’s in Public Health does not matter due to the fact that Brown is a Doctor and that qualifies him for the position. But Brown is not a physician, he holds a doctorate in optometry. Optometrists are not medical doctors and do not qualify as Public Health Directors under state law. Only Colorado State licensed physicians are qualified. The only thing that qualified Brown as Public Health Director was his Master’s in Public Health. (A side note, Registered Nurses are also qualified to be Public Health Directors with the right training and certifications.)

The *Tribune* is continuing its investigation on Clifford Brown’s resume and past work experience. The *Tribune* continues to offer Brown and the BOH the opportunity to prove Brown’s Master’s in Public Health.

Brown has still not replied to the *Tribune*.

– Jordan Hedberg