

Response to Councilman Schechter's letter to TBOR

Devon Viehman <devon@jacksonholereport.com>

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To: Town Council <electedofficials@jacksonwy.gov>

Cc: commissioners@tetoncountywy.gov <commissioners@tetoncountywy.gov>

Dear Councilman Schechter,

Your recent letter addressed to the Teton Board of Realtors regarding the annual fireworks display was discouraging, rude, and beyond unnecessary.

I was a board member in 2015, the year the Town Council asked the Realtors to finance the fireworks display to help preserve the annual tradition when Rotary and the Jaycees would no longer fund it. And we stepped up to the call. And since 2015, it has simply been assumed that every year TBOR would continue to organize and finance them, which is why the board submitted their request for assistance. **However, we all understand the budget constraints the town is under, and a simple “no” would have been sufficient.**

But since you wrote a three-page, condescending essay admonishing the very group the Town sought help from originally and who provided it for going on six years now, instead of picking up the phone or sending an email asking for clarification, I feel compelled to respond as thoroughly as you did.

In your letter you lectured our association about the money we make and where it could be directed. So, I will explain that TBOR is simply an association with dues we all pay, due that do not have anything to do with commissions paid. Realtors are independent contractors and cannot be required to pay any additional dues to the association as you insinuated that we should.

Since you did not do your due diligence and reach out to educate yourself before writing your inconsiderate dissertation, you are likely unaware of TBOR's work in the community. To begin, TBOR and I have been working diligently to create a community housing fund launching in July that will help put affordable housing in the ground. You are probably also unaware that TBOR gives out over \$20,000 of college scholarships annually and donated \$65,000 for PPE for schools in 2020. I'd gladly inform you of the other charitable contributions we make to organizations and our community as a whole if I thought you were open to hearing them. You appear, however, to be more interested in painting us in broad strokes as the evil realtors who create problems rather than solve them.

Additionally, you addressed a real estate transfer tax and how “flummoxed” you are about how our local board has not supported it. Again, a simple phone call to them could have helped you understand how they work. Local associations fall under the state and national rules. I know in years past you have had some confusion about where nonprofits have to draw the line when it comes to engaging in politics. Local boards are not allowed to take a political position on ANY state legislative issue. It must be done by the state executive committee only.

To borrow your term, I am “flabbergasted” you thought your response was an appropriate way to correspond professionally. Sadly, the time and energy that went into drafting your letter could have been better used to address one of our other local issues *or to effectively engage TBOR to achieve our common goals*. If being an elected leader stresses you as much as you regularly indicate, perhaps you should consider resigning for someone more cut-out for teamwork. Sadly for your colleagues, your ill-informed letter has cast a negative light on the whole council. When you write such a letter, public perception is that you are speaking on behalf of your colleagues too, as inaccurate as you and I know

that to be. A leader should inspire our town and encourage groups to work together, not create further division as you have done. Condescension and rudeness will never garner the objectives you set out to achieve. It will only create more individuals and entities who will lose respect for you and who will not vote for you as a result.

TBOR is an association of 600+ members and your unprofessional letter is circulating realtor offices. Our members are mothers and fathers, river guides and ski instructors, bartenders, appraisers, teachers and so on. Roughly one in 50 people is a licensed agent. So every time you sit at a restaurant or go to the grocery store there are likely two to three agents in the building with you. When you go to a sporting event, we are cheering on the team. When you go to a nonprofit fundraiser, we are there too – and many times we are there with a name tag that says “board member.”

Realtors have a powerful voice at the local, state and national level. I encourage you to engage with us more without the goal of showing how clever and snarky you can be. We all know you can out snark the best of the best, but it doesn't earn you anyone's respect. A great start to the process of engagement would be to apologize for your completely out-of-line letter regarding topics you were too uneducated on to address accurately. I believe that TBOR will be asking you to meet with them and I encourage you to do so.

TBOR members give their time, money, and talents consistently, and I am honored to be a part of our Realtor community. Again, a simple "no" to their request would have sufficed. Perhaps next time you will consider brevity over an attempt at being domineering.

Devon Viehman

ENGEL & VÖLKERS JACKSON HOLE

Engel & Völkers U.S. Holdings, Inc.

70 S. King Street

Jackson, WY 83001

USA

Cell: +1 307.690.0621

Internet: www.jacksonholereport.com

