

Attorney calls the question on cable free speech

Access user Todd Levitt asks judge to rule against SWOCC bylaws

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER
ppace@oe.homecomm.net

Does the Farmington area local cable authority violate freedom of speech?

One Southwestern Oakland County Cable Commission public access user claims it does. And that accusation and a request for a remedy will be brought

before an Oakland County Circuit Court judge to be decided Wednesday.

Todd Levitt, who broadcasts his own "The Todd L. Levitt Show" on channel 12 governed by the Farmington, Farmington Hills and Novi local cable commission, is asking that a judge rule that the commission seriously modify its bylaws.

"I will be declaring the rules and regulations to be unconstitutional," said Levitt's attorney, Stephen M. Taylor.

"We want a permanent injunction on the rules," he said.

The issue started nearly two years ago.

Levitt's talk show pokes fun at lawyers, Taylor said. Levitt, an attorney, produced a wine tasting segment in March 2000, said Taylor. He was suspended by director Caren Collins for one year, because he violated the rule that no alcohol is allowed on SWOCC premises.

Collins for one year, because he violated the rule that no alcohol is allowed on SWOCC premises.

Levitt appealed the decision to the cable commission and received a lighter sentence, a two-month probation.

Technical difficulties

Then in April 2001, Taylor said a show Levitt produced had technical difficulties and he wanted to redo the segment. Taylor said Collins insisted the original show be broadcast nonetheless and that's when Levitt decided to tape his show at other studios outside SWOCC.

He also said Collins wanted certain portions of a show removed because she considered them to be commercialization.

Taylor claims Collins has unlimited authority at the studio and his client wants it stopped.

"Cable TV is like any other mode of expression, it comes governed in the first amendment," Taylor said.

Collins said the issue is not about vi-

olating Levitt's freedom of speech, but about company policy.

"Any kind of business you run has operating rules," said Collins. "That why we have them, but they pertain to operations. They have nothing to do with content (of the shows produced)."

Collins said Levitt has not been banned from using the studio, but like any other access user, he has to sit down in a preproduction meeting with SWOCC staff before a show is taped.

The reason behind the meeting is that staff needs to know how the facility will be used for a show so the staff can accommodate those needs, she said.

Taylor has requested a summary judgment in his client's request before Oakland County Circuit Court Judge Deborah Tyrer at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday.

BUSINESS NEWS

NEW OFFICE

Dr. Albert Bayer is pleased to announce that he has moved his growing psychiatric practice to a new facility in 33451 West 14 Mile Road in Farmington Hills. He had previously practiced at 7001 Orchard Lake Road in West Bloomfield.

Bayer is a board-certified psychiatrist who specializes in general and geriatric psychiatry, as well as sexual dysfunction and forensic medicine.

He is also an adjunct instructor at Wayne State University and Clinical Coordinator of Michigan Peer Review.

For more information, call 248-661-6708.

NEW FLOWER STORE

Sparr's Flowers new store, Hearts and Roses, 27899 Orchard Lake Road, in Farmington Hills brings a European flavor to their fresh floral designs.

The Sparr's difference is in the arranging and in the freshness. Just as the Dutch masters do on the streets throughout the Netherlands, Sparr's bouquets are hand-tied and make attractive free-standing ornamentation in a tray of water or in a more traditional vase.

"Because Sparr's Flowers purchases direct from growers in Holland, it eliminates five days on a loading dock," said Jared Sparr, owner of Sparr's Flowers.

"We also throw out any unsold flowers after eight hours, further

ensuring a fresh product."

Sparr is one of approximately 700 floral arrangers in the world who have met the rigorous standards necessary to be inducted as a member of the American Institute of Floral Designers.

Sparr's Flowers was founded in 1953 by Louis Sparr, Jared's grandfather.

"I think my grandfather would be proud," Sparr said of his AIFD accreditation.

Sparr's Flowers also has locations in Northville and Novi.

STOCK SPLIT

Toll Brothers, Inc., the nation's leading builder of luxury homes with Midwest headquarters based locally in Farmington Hills, today announced a 2-for-1 split of its common stock.

Stockholders of record as of the close of business on March 14 will be entitled to one additional share for each share held at that time. The new shares will be distributed on March 28.

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Robert I. Toll stated, "We are pleased to announce this stock split for our stockholders. We believe that this action, which reflects management's confidence in our tremendous growth potential, will increase investor liquidity and enhance our appeal in the retail market."

Toll Brothers, Inc. generated \$2.2 billion in revenues and \$213 million in earnings in fiscal 2001. The company has pro-

duced over 20 percent compound average annual growth in revenues and earnings for the last one, three, five, seven and ten year periods.

Toll Brothers was established in 1987 and became a publicly traded company in 1986. The company serves move-up, empty-nest and active-adult home buyers, and operates in 21 states, including Michigan. For more information visit www.tollbrothers.com.

AAMCO OPENS SHOP

The latest member of the AAMCO chain of transmission specialists recently opened its doors at 33350 Nine Mile Road.

"We're proud to join the Farmington business community," said Doug Longenecker, owner of the new AAMCO franchise. "This is wonderful place to set up business and a great place to live."

The Farmington location joins 725 other locations across North America in offering quality, value-priced transmission repairs.

AAMCO of Farmington offers drivers expert transmission service featuring qualified technicians, state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment, and a choice of warranties that are honored from coast-to-coast.

Longenecker said, "We like AAMCO's commitment to 100 percent customer satisfaction."

Gesund takes another shot at county board seat

BY PAUL R. PACE
STAFF WRITER
ppace@oe.homecomm.net

Ryan Gesund is running for Oakland County Commissioner in the 14th District, which consists primarily of Farmington Hills, west of Drake and the entire city of Farmington.

This is Gesund's third run for county commission, having campaigned in 1998 and in 2000.

Gesund has lived in Farmington Hills since age 12. He is a graduate of North Farmington High School and holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Eastern Michigan University.

■ Gesund also wants to revamp the county's vaccination process.

He said the Farmington area needs flu vaccination clinics in the city such as the high schools or the Costick Activities Center as opposed to forcing people to drive outside the city boundaries to get shots.



Ryan Gesund

He joined his father and brother after graduation to help run Super Car Wash Systems, where he serves as vice-president and secretary. The company owns eight car washes in Oakland and Macomb counties.

He has served on the committee to increase voter participation for three years. He said he attends council meetings and study sessions.

The 29-year-old believes he is the most qualified candidate,

after attending 60 percent of the county commission meetings in the last four years.

His plan includes updates on the drainage and sewage system and initiating quarterly town meetings. As he has promised in past campaigns, he said he would introduce five resolutions in the first three months of 2003, all of which pertain to issues about which he is concerned.

Gesund also wants to revamp the county's vaccination process.

He said the Farmington area needs flu vaccination clinics in the city such as the high schools or the Costick Activities Center as opposed to forcing people to drive outside the city boundaries to get shots.

He said he is a Democrat, but is running on his own issues.

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