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N.C. Senate OKs bill to allow online public notices

2013-04-24T00:22:16 Wednesday, April 24, 2013

Updated 12:22AM

By Travis Fain

travis.fain@news-record.com

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GREENSBORO — Local governments in Guilford and nine other North Carolina counties wouldn't have to publish public notices in a local newspaper under legislation approved by the N.C. Senate on Tuesday.

Sen. Trudy Wade's bill allows those governments to put the notices online instead, and potentially save hundreds of thousands of dollars in advertising costs.

Senate Bill 287 passed the Senate 26-22 on Tuesday, a close vote in a body often divided along party lines.

A handful of Republicans sided with Democrats against the bill.

The bill now goes to the N.C. House. [Continue Reading](#)



A separate bill, Senate Bill 186, would extend online publication statewide, but it has been sitting in a Senate committee for more than a month. Wade, R-Guilford and a former Greensboro City Council member, is also a primary sponsor on that bill.

She and others have said it's unfair and unnecessary to require governments to buy advertising in paid-circulation papers, a part of North Carolina law since the 1940s. The Internet made it more efficient to put notices online, they argue.

Opponents of the bill say requiring publication in a newspaper is an important guard on transparency, particularly since many people don't have Internet access.

Wade's bill would allow government leaders to put notices in free-circulation papers, provided they are published at least once a week and have at least 25,000 readers.

Governments still would have to post rezoning and other notices in affected neighborhoods.

They would have to provide notices by mail or email to whoever requests them, and put hard copies in a book available to the public.

Local governments wouldn't have to change anything about their publication policies if this bill becomes law, but they would have the option to.

Those that exercise it would have to publish instructions on how to access the new notices at least once a month for a year in a paid-circulation paper.

Guilford County spent more than \$104,500 on public notices in 2012, including more than \$80,300 to advertise tax delinquencies in the News & Record, according to county figures.

The county adds \$8 to delinquent property tax bills to cover the costs. Assistant Tax Director Greg French said the county likely recoups most of that, though it may take years. He said the potential embarrassment of having late tax notices published in the paper spurs people to pay, but he couldn't provide figures.

The amount Greensboro spent last year on notices wasn't available Tuesday.

Contact Travis Fain at 373-4476, and follow @travisfain on Twitter.

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Previous Comments (5)...

Posted by Keith Brown

Date: Wednesday, April 24, 2013

Travis you are not reporting the whole picture on just how much money the news and record takes in regarding public notices, add every city in this county as well plus add school board notices and then add all the county including the tax delinquency bill. You work for the company ask the financial department for the whole picture. I have reported close to \$218,000 <http://triadwatch.blogspot.com/2013/02/repost-on-21877513-is-amount-guilford.html> Where are you getting your numbers because they are way off.

Posted by Keith Brown

Date: Wednesday, April 24, 2013

this article is a total farce when it comes to how much money it is costing the taxpayers of Guilford county. the editors of the news and record should be ashamed with this type of reporting

Posted by George Hartzman

Date: Wednesday, April 24, 2013

From Keith's information supplied by Guilford County, the Greensboro News and Record received \$206,441 from 4/30/2010 to 4/30/2011, not including other municipalities and the Guilford County Schools. Please clarify your numbers.

Posted by Travis Fain

Date: Wednesday, April 24, 2013

The figure I gave is from the Guilford County commission/staff, which provided it in March when commissioners discussed this issue. It's a 2012 figure, which was the latest year available. I didn't collect the school board's information Tuesday, but plan to before I write about this issue again. I should have Greensboro's by then, too. The article is not a farce, and we are not ashamed of it. I've been in Raleigh today and am just seeing these comments now, though Mr. Brown was kind enough to call me on my cell phone today to inform me that my article "was crap."

Posted by Keith Brown

Date: Friday, April 26, 2013

Don't forget Oak Ridge, Summerfield, Gibsonville, Whitsett, Pleasant Garden and board of elections. Nice way to low ball the numbers because you are way off. Let's see the actual invoices added up like I did for Guilford county <http://triadwatch.blogspot.com/2013/02/repost-on-21877513-is-amount-guilford.html> Which equaled \$218,000

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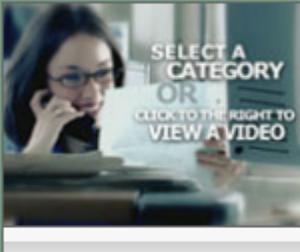
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