

Thank you for this opportunity to address the board. My name is Ford Peterson, Dassel Township. I am speaking on behalf of a group of Meeker citizens, Lori Musolf, Litchfield, Chris Schiroo, Greenleaf, and Ben Smith, Grove City.

With the exception of Commissioner Huberty, the November 2012 election selected you in preference over your predecessor. The reasons for voter discontent would require the rest of the day. Today, I want to focus on just one of those reasons and express my concern that nothing has changed.

Each year the office of our State Auditor performs an audit to provide us with assurance that your activities are appropriate—and legal. At the December 2012 Truth-in-Taxation hearing, I complained about the former commissioner's failure to recognize and approve the annual audit for two consecutive years. As of today, make that three years. The previous board failed to discuss audit findings in public and failed to approve or rebut the auditor's work. Administrator Paul Virnig informed me at that time that there is no statutory requirement to discuss or approve the audit. THIS board knows that the lack of statutory requirement does NOT take precedence over good business practice and the exercise of good judgment whenever possible. Yet this board continues to ignore good business practice by failing to discuss and approve our State Auditor's 2012 findings issued last September.

On January 6, 2014, the Third Judicial District of Minnesota released a "*Partial Summary Judgment Order*" in the case of various citizen plaintiffs vs. Wabasha County and other parties. In that order, Judge James A. Fabian ordered:

*3. Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment is hereby **GRANTED**. The Safe Driving Class operated by the Wabasha County Sheriff's Department is not legally authorized under Minnesota law and Wabasha County and the Sheriff's Department shall be permanently enjoined from conducting all activities related to the Safe Driving Class until the program is legally authorized under Minnesota Law.*

In our State Auditor's 2012 Meeker County Audit report, issued last September, we find a recommendation on page 129 about County Attorney Spector's Driver Awareness Class. On page 130: Other Findings and Recommendations:

***Effect:** The County's Driver Awareness Class is unauthorized and in violation of Minn. Stat. §169.022.*

As of yesterday, the Meeker County's website contained links to a brochure for a similar class so I must presume that this illegal activity continues today. It has come to my attention that this class, characterized by one attendee as a discussion about the MN Vikings, confiscates \$75 from its victims and illegally diverts public funds into the Sheriff's budget. County Attorney Spector's brochure describes the program as part of his office's "*Diversion Program*." What portion of the Sheriff's budget contains the plunder? How many victims are there and how many dollars have been "diverted" from the public? It appears that by continuing to offer this "safety class," Captain Thoma and Attorney Spector are essentially using public funds to buy votes in the upcoming 2014 election this November.

This board needs to institute immediate reforms, refund 100% of the victims of County Attorney Spector's "diversions," and provide an apology to the victims. I believe Sheriff Norlin, Captain Thoma, who administrates the program, and County Attorney Spector, should apologize for this county's lack of good judgment.

This board must choose to act on the valuable recommendations arriving last September as part of the auditor's annual report. Meeker expended considerable cost to obtain the auditor's professional and independent opinion. The people deserve to benefit from the findings. The auditor described an abuse of power. This board must reform the practices of the former board, act on the auditor's recommendations, and reform the Sheriff's illegal activities.