



Office of the Mayor
San Jose, California

7/9/2019

To whom it may concern:

My name is Chris Krewson, and I'm the executive director of Local Independent Online News (LION) Publishers. I'm writing this letter after I was startled to hear from one of our members — Ramona Giwargis, of the excellent San Jose Spotlight — about a city of San Jose policy that's unfair, outdated and, frankly, stunningly ignorant of the state of local media in 2019.

Ms. Giwargis tells me that her publication, the city's first nonprofit news organization dedicated to independent political and business reporting, is not being included in a roundup of coverage of the city, one that's generated using taxpayer-funded resources. The reason, she tells me, is a city policy not to include digital-only publications, unless they're national in scope. That this policy is issued from the heart of Silicon Valley, the home of more disruption of every industry in the nation, makes a bad thing worse.

If the city of Youngstown, Ohio followed this policy, by the end of the summer that city would not be able to include any publications. That's because The Vindicator, the city's sole daily newspaper, will be shutting down before September, after trying for five months to sell an organization that has lost money for the last few years. The weekly newspaper serving Katy, Texas announced last week that it too will close. And I can't imagine your office has seen anything but contraction in the reporting ranks at the San Jose Mercury News, once the crown jewel of the Knight Ridder newspaper chain, and now a shadow of its former self — a zombie newspaper barely kept alive by its current owners, Digital First Media. I once heard the then-Mercury News Editor Neil Chase call Digital First "the worst owners in journalism" at a journalism conference.

LION members like Ramona and San Jose Spotlight aren't the future of local news — they're very much the present. In fact, one LION Publisher, VTDigger, started with one former newspaper reporter who was laid off, Anne Galloway. Now VTDigger is the largest news organization in the state of Vermont. Former Merc News editor Neil Chase is the CEO of CalMatters, a digital-only nonprofit that covers the state of California — under your rules, ineligible to be included in your roundup.

I strongly urge this office to reconsider this policy. If the goal is to share relevant coverage of your city, then that work will increasingly be done by digital-only outlets that spring up as what's left of the daily newspaper industry continues its inevitable slide into death.

Respectfully,

Chris Krewson
Executive Director
Local Independent Online News (LION) Publishers