



# NEWSWORTHY Online

THE MINNESOTA NEWS COUNCIL: *Promoting fair, vigorous, and trusted journalism*

February 2008

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- The Minnesota News Council was an exhibitor at the 2008 [Minnesota Newspaper Association](#) Convention, Jan. 23-25. At the convention, the Minnesota News Council presented its annual Accountability Award to one of its founders and long-time supporter, Bob Shaw. *Some highlights...* Former News Council member [Don Shelby](#) spoke at the Thursday luncheon, the MNA's Distinguished Service to Journalism award was presented to retired [Painesville Press](#) publishers Lynne & Peter Jacobson and [Jody Hanson](#), publisher of the *Echo Press* in Alexandria, MN, was elected president of the MNA.
- On February 21, the News Council convened to hear a complaint by a Duluth School Board member against the Duluth Budgeteer News. News Council members were connected by video conference to attendees in Duluth. The Council voted to deny his complaints. *Read more below.*
- The Minnesota News Council co-sponsored the February 25th event, "New Media, New Standards? Ethics in Online Journalism," presented by the [MN Society of Professional Journalists](#) and [Minnesota Public Radio](#). Look for a recap of the event, including access to audio and video from this public forum in our next newsletter!

Executive Director [Sarah Bauer](#) can be reached at (612) 341-9357.

## NEWS COUNCIL PRESENTS ACCOUNTABILITY AWARD TO BOB SHAW



Sarah Bauer with Bob Shaw

The Minnesota News Council presents its Accountability Award annually to a person or publication that has worked to promote fair and trusted journalism in the state. The News Council presented its 2008 award to Bob Shaw at the MNA Convention Jan. 24.

In 1970, when he was working as the MNA Manager, Bob played an integral part in founding the News Council. The News Council began as an offshoot of the "Ways and Ethics Committee," of the MNA and eventually became an independent non-profit, but Bob's dedication to the organization's mission has never ceased. Shaw was a member of the hearing board from 1971-1981, and has served as its "resident historian," by recently recounting the organization's early history to the News Council staff and board of directors.

Accepting the award, Shaw noted, "The News Council is a difficult proposition for newspapers to accept; but the public loves the News Council." He encouraged newspapers throughout Minnesota to continue to participate in the News Council complaint process.

You can view more photos from the event [HERE](#).

### In Memoriam Hesham Hussein

Hesham Hussein was the president of the Muslim American Society of Minnesota and a member of the News Council since 2005. He was killed last month in a car crash while visiting family in Saudi Arabia. We are deeply saddened at the lost of this great community leader, and offer our sympathy to his family and friends.

[Read more about his life's work.](#)

### CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MNA DOORPRIZE WINNERS!

Bert A Nelson

[Perham Enterprise Bulletin](#)  
New York Mills, MN

Sandra M. Grussing  
[Sunfish Gazette](#)  
Atwater, MN

Jean Matua  
[Tri-County News](#)  
Kimball, MN

\*Special thanks to [Mall of America](#)  
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## NEWS COUNCIL DENIES THREE COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE DULUTH BUDGETEER NEWS

On Feb. 21, the Minnesota News Council voted Thursday to deny three complaints against the *Duluth Budgeteer News*, affirming the paper's decision to run a Nov. 4, 2007 opinion column critical of Duluth School Board candidate Gary Glass.

Glass, who was elected to the school board in November, complained that an editorial column, "Beware of dirty tricks during the campaign season," unfairly mischaracterized his campaign as "nasty and misleading," and included comments he made prior to becoming a declared candidate for school board. Glass also complained that the timing of the publication was unfair – the paper was published the weekend prior to the election - because he could not offer a rebuttal before Duluth citizens went to the polls.

"Newspapers have a basic right to express political opinion, provided they label it as such," *Duluth Budgeteer News* editor Jana Peterson told the News Council. "The column did not introduce any new information, something that newspapers try to avoid immediately before an election – that's part of the reason we don't allow any political letters to the editor that week."

The News Council voted 10-3 to deny a complaint that it was unfair for the *Budgeteer News* to publish an opinion column accusing a candidate of dirty tricks, without giving him a chance to respond.

On the question of whether it was unfair for the paper to publish a column that included statements that Glass made prior to becoming a declared candidate for school board, the News Council unanimously responded it was not unfair.

The News Council also voted 12 – 1 to deny a complaint that it was unfair for the *Budgeteer News* to publish a column that characterized Glass' campaign as "nasty and misleading."

"All newspapers, weekly or daily, editorialize right before elections," said media member Reed Anfinson, owner and publisher of the Swift County Monitor-News, a weekly paper in Benson. "Our columns provide a summary of what's happened during the campaign season - we have the opportunity to say 'here's why we support this candidate.'"

Media member Karen Boros was concerned about the timing of the publication. "There was no chance for the attacked person to respond," noted Boros.

"It felt unfair when it happened to me," said public member Tom Forsythe recalling an experience similar to Glass', "but, I do think it's appropriate for a paper to editorialize prior to an election."

Glass said the News Council's discussion of the issues was interesting. "I just wish there would have been time to respond to the column," he noted. [Read more...](#)

**Read Budgeteer News Editor Jana Peterson's thoughts on the process [HERE](#).**

**Read the Duluth News Tribune's coverage of the story [HERE](#).**

### 2008 Hearing Dates

The News Council meets every other month to consider complaints about news coverage. All public hearings begin at 12:15 p.m., are free to attend and open to the public. Check the [MNC Web site](#) for location information. Consider visiting us at a hearing in 2008!

Thursday, April 10, 2008  
Thursday June 19, 2008  
Thursday, August 21, 2008  
Thursday, October 16, 2008  
Thursday, December 11, 2008



*Council Members Pat Berg, Dave Beal and Roberta Johnson discuss the results.*

To stop receiving this monthly update of the Minnesota News Council, please [click here](#).  
Questions or comments? E-mail us at [info@news-council.org](mailto:info@news-council.org) or call (612) 341-9357.

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