

PRINEVILLE REVIEW

May 22nd, 2026

Statement responding to the Alfalfa Fire District rescinding its unconstitutional policy & trespass

I am aware of the decision by the Alfalfa Fire District to rescind its so-called “adjournment policy” and withdraw the formal trespass notice that sought to prohibit me from attending or remaining on district property during and after public meetings.

Those actions came only after the filing of my federal civil rights lawsuit and after a federal district court judge with the United States District Court for the District of Oregon determined that the district’s conduct was likely unconstitutional, granting a temporary restraining order protecting my ability to attend and report on public meetings.

The district’s reversal is significant because it appears to end, at least in part, ongoing retaliatory conduct and continuing violations of the First & Fourteenth Amendments alleged in the lawsuit. Public officials should never use government authority to target journalists or citizens for engaging in protected speech, criticism, or lawful newsgathering activities.

At the same time, the district’s decision does not absolve the Alfalfa Fire District or specific officials of the claims already asserted in federal court, nor does it erase the injuries caused by the conduct alleged in the complaint. The lawsuit centers on claims of retaliation against protected press activity and the broader pattern of actions taken against me following reporting on matters of substantial public concern involving the district.

That primarily includes the egregious conduct by Fire Chief Chad LaVallee, former board member Nate Starr, and current board member Mark Laucks.

At the same time, I believe it is important to acknowledge that directors Dustin Piggott and Carolyn Chase have not risen to the level of conduct witnessed from others associated with these events. Based on the information presently available, neither Piggott nor Chase appear to have undertaken discretionary actions intended to violate constitutional rights, nor does it appear they participated in efforts to summon law enforcement in contravention of the federal court’s order during the May 13th public meetings. At present, their involvement appears limited primarily to participation in the passage of the underlying policy and separate questions concerning Oregon public meetings law compliance.

For more than a year, the Prineville Review has reported extensively on issues involving the Alfalfa Fire District, including public records disputes, public meetings concerns, allegations of election law violations, financial oversight questions, and other matters directly affecting taxpayers and the community. The actions taken against me and this publication—including efforts to remove journalists from public property, restrict post-meeting interactions, and issue the unprecedented trespass order—represented a serious escalation that struck at the core constitutional protections for freedom of the press.

The ability of journalists and citizens to observe government officials, document public meetings, ask questions, and engage in lawful newsgathering activity without fear of retaliation is fundamental to transparent government and democratic accountability. Public bodies cannot selectively silence criticism or punish reporters because they dislike scrutiny or unfavorable coverage.

The Prineville Review remains committed to continuing its reporting on the Alfalfa Fire District and other public bodies throughout Central Oregon fairly, independently, and without intimidation. We also remain committed to ensuring that constitutional protections for freedom of the press and public accountability are fully upheld.

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