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Internship Program

Week of April 8th 2016

Francis Nicolai Application denied by Mount Pleasant Planning Board after 30-year dispute

Do you know when you go somewhere and you can just feel that something special is going to happen? Now imagine being a journalist and being sent on a random story that you basically have no idea and being tasked with telling a story so monumental it took 30 years to settle. Well as I’ve been told by my supervisor, Examiner Editor in Chief Martin Wilbur, sometimes journalists have to take on stories they don’t have that much background information on and capture the greatness of a story by asking questions. Well that’s what I did on April 7th 2016. I attended the 1st Mount Pleasant Planning Board Meeting of the month. The topic assigned was to write an article about a 30-year dispute with the neighbors of Leroy Street and Chesnutt Terrace in Pleasantville and Judge Francis Nicolai about an application to construct a 288 square foot one family wetland residence in a wetland buffer. Originally knowing very little about the situation I asked Martin Wilbur for more background information. After receiving two articles from two other journalists, I read about the case and the different disputes of the hearing. The application actually was amended multiple times as the residence project was reduced to 288 square feet and a fill of hydric soil was added to the wetland buffer. Attending the event, I felt a special type of importance being the only media journalist there. I wanted to write a good article about this dispute. I did not expect what happened next to happen. The Mount Pleasant Planning Board motioned to deny the application by Nicolai stating that it would set a terrible precedent in the town of Mt Pleasant building a home in an important natural resource area that protects the wetlands form intrusion. After the unanimous motion was handed down I just felt all of the emotions of the neighbors in the court room. Most of these neighbors that I have never met before I felt that tonight was important from before I was even born people were fighting for this application to be denied and the night I happen to show up to write on this story the application gets denied and the Pleasantville Examiner gets the exclusive and I get to be the reporter to share the story of a bunch of people coming together to make a difference in the neighborhood they care about. I loved it. Its events like this, stories like this that make me wake up every day and say I want to be a journalist in this world. The power you feel being able to capture such a wonderful moment and tell the world. My favorite quote I received from the event was from the Community Leader Carmel Promisel who said ““This has been a 30-year journey and reason why it’s so successful is because of all the neighbors that have gotten together. It’s a very unique neighborhood where people know each other. It’s a real sense of community and I think it exemplifies what Pleasantville is all about.” Being a journalist your job is to capture the most important things and give it life. Your job is to inform the public. At that moment when I sat down and wrote this story, I imagined all the smiles it would receive from the people reading in the newspaper about the decision that was finally made and the happiness in the community. I wrote the story in about 2 hours and after I was done I knew that this story was going to have an impact on the neighbors of Pleasantville. Who would have known. All I can say is that as I attended this event and walked in through the doors of that court house I knew that something special was going to happen and something did. I was happy to be there.