

# Memo

**To:** North Canton City Council Members  
**From:** Chuck Osborne  
**CC:** Roy Batista  
Tom Treadon  
**Date:** 1/10/02  
**Re:** Presentation By Administration On The Renewal of J-Group Contract

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I would like to report to council members information I have obtained that I think will help in formulating an opinion on whether city council should fund a renewal of the J-Group contact. In an attempt to verify the credentials of the J-Group as stated by the mayor at last Monday's council meeting, I visited with individuals listed below to ascertain to what extent the J-Group, or any of its staff, were involved in the creation of the *Massillon Alive Schedule of Events brochure*. In the mayor's presentation, the brochure was presented as a total creation and production by Terry Piekarski, the daughter of J-Group founder, Dave Johnson. In my discussions with Massillon's Community Development Director, a Massillon Chamber of Commerce staff member and a Massillon resident, I have found this to be otherwise.

Listed below are the individuals that I consulted, contact phone numbers, and information gathered from each.

My first contact was with the Massillon Chamber of Commerce. Here I talked with Jane Wickerham. She can be contacted at the chamber at (330) 833-3146. From the conversation, Jane Wickerham told me the following:

- Jane Wickerham has never heard of the J-Group.
- That the brochure, *Massillon Alive Schedule of Events*, that Mayor Rice displayed at the council meeting was put out by the Massillon Alive Committee and the Massillon Chamber of Commerce.
- A resident of Massillon named Margy Vogt did the brochure in its entirety.

My second contact was with Massillon's Community Development Director. His name is Aane A. Aaby. His office number is (330) 830-1721. I learned the following background information concerning Terry Piekarski.

- Terry Piekarski was actively involved in several non-profit organizations in Massillon and that she had served as a board member in various non-profit organizations. He said that she

worked and lived in Massillon for a time. As he put it, a life-changing event occurred and she ended her employment and all affiliations in Massillon and moved out of town. I did not ask how long ago that this took place.

- In regards to her involvement in the *Massillon Schedule of Events* brochure, he stated that her area of expertise was in fund-raising and promotional activities and did not think Terry had any part in the brochure.

I also questioned Mr. Aaby about Massillon's grant writing process and use of consultants. Regarding the grant writing process Mr. Aaby stated that:

- The city engineer completes and submits requests for grants and as an example, related how the city had recently received a large grant for their water plant. (I will add here that the grant writing process is a bit of a misnomer as it mostly requires completing a questionnaire such as an income tax form).
- As for pushing the grant request through the approval process, Mr. Aaby stated that is what your currently elected state representatives officials can and will do for you.
- Mr. Aaby stated that Massillon only uses consultants on occasion and only on a project basis. He stated that the most that they have ever paid a consultant is \$2,500.

My last contact was with Margy Vogt, the individual who single-handedly put out the *Massillon Schedule of Events* brochure. Her contact number is (330) 832-8469. Mrs. Vogt was the most knowledgeable regarding the brochure since its first publication in 1994. Somewhat apologetically, she stated the following:

- Margy Vogt said she has done the brochure six of the seven years that it has been produced. In one year, the brochure was contracted out to someone else ( and not to Terry Piekarski).
- Margy Vogt said she does the brochure in its entirety. This includes taking all the photos, computer design and layout and illustrations (using Quark Express). She also supplies all the content for the brochure. In last year's brochure she also arranged 32 events.
- Margy Vogt said she herself has chaired the Massillon Alive Committee for three years (2000, 2001 and for 2002).

Margy Vogt's knowledge of Terry Piekarski's background was the following:

- Terry Piekarski came up with the original idea for the Massillon Alive Schedule of Events brochure.
- Terry Piekarski chaired the Massillon Alive Committee in 1998 & 1999. (This consists of one annual meeting) Margy Vogt said that in one of those two years, Terry was quite late for the meeting and that she had to chair the meeting in her place until she arrived.
- After Terry Piekarski's life changing event (noted above) she made a habit of bringing her child to work with her everyday. This practice caused some friction at her place of employment and that under these circumstances she resigned and left Massillon. Margy stated that Terry has left Massillon in the last few months.

Mary Vogt has provided me with several copies of the Massillon Alive brochures she has done over the years, as well as other works for the city of Massillon to include Restaurant Guides, Chamber dinner invitations, a historical guide of Massillon and publicity material for Massillon's Arena. All of this material only adds to her credibility in this situation.

In light of all of the inconsistencies between the J-Group presentation made to council members at Monday night's counsel meeting, I would not be inclined to renew the contract with the J-Group. I have gone back and listened to the tape of the mayor's presentation on the qualifications of the J-Group to make sure I did not misunderstand anything and, although I mean no disrespect here, there are obvious discrepancies between what was presented to counsel and the facts at hand.

I am greatly dismayed by these findings whether intentional or not and I am sure all council members will weigh these findings before coming to any decision on the administration's request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chuck Osborne".

Chuck Osborne  
Council at-Large  
City of North Canton