

September 20, 2015

Re: Letter Attesting to Extraordinary Community Service of Dennis Walters

To whom it may concern,

This letter documents the extraordinary community service of Dennis and Lee-Anne Walters, on behalf of citizens in Flint, MI; the State of Michigan, and the United States from early 2015 to the present. Dennis and Lee-Anne's work exemplifies how normal citizens can "make a difference" when encountering misconduct by corrupt government agencies. In the current case the questionable behavior(s) included conduct of the State of Michigan's emergency manager for Flint, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and the City of Flint Water Department.

In the months ahead, I believe that the team the Walters assembled (including other Flint Citizens, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)-Michigan, Virginia Tech and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) will demonstrate that multiple federal laws were violated when the City of Flint switched its water supply from Detroit to the local Flint River. When the switch was made, no one had considered the corrosivity of the new water supply, or took the legally required steps to mitigate corrosion. As a direct result, the introduction of the new water supply to the City of Flint's distribution system caused epidemic levels of red water, water main breaks/leaks, bacteria problems/violations, disinfection by-product violations and elevated lead in water. In an effort to understand health problems that their family and neighbors were experiencing, Dennis and Lee-Anne became part-time private investigators, part-time scientist/engineers and part-time activists to get at the truth of what was happening. They essentially gave up about 6 months of their lives to defend the welfare of their community. Dennis and Lee-Anne are true American Heroes.

I feel highly qualified to make this judgement, because I research and teach graduate students on Engineering Ethics and Heroism at Virginia Tech. I have won numerous awards for my own work, including the MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, the National Science Foundation (NSF) Presidential Faculty Fellowship awarded from the White House, the Walter L. Huber Research Prize from the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Villanova Award for Professional Ethics, and the IEEE Barus Award for Defending the Public Health and Interest (at great personal risk) amongst other honors. In 2003-2005, I also served as the president of Association of Environmental Engineering and Science Professors (AEESP). The Walter's epic efforts serve as a model for other citizens and as a case study for engineers/scientists. Indeed, they told their story to my graduate ethics class last week, which had a very profound effect on my students. Several of the students stated that "I had no idea that anything like that could happen in America," and were very inspired by all the Walters have accomplished.

Specifically, the Walter's demonstrated to an EPA employee that there was no corrosion inhibitor in the City of Flint water supply—a fact that can only be characterized as gross negligence for a system with an aging pipe network and fifteen thousand lead pipes. They also pushed MDEQ and the City of Flint for answers, were brushed aside, and later revealed to my satisfaction that these entities were untrustworthy and cared little for the public welfare. They also coordinated and helped

execute an unprecedented survey of lead levels in the Flint water supply by distributing 300 sample kits to Flint residents. Dennis used his experience in chain of custody and security in law enforcement, to implement many steps that would make it very difficult for anyone to tamper with the test kits. They also implemented an efficient way of distributing kits, achieving geographical diversity, and making sure that people were properly trained in sample collection for the survey.

The results of our survey ultimately demonstrated that the City of Flint water was unsafe and posed a serious health risk to at least 5,000 Flint water customers. Some pediatricians in Flint recently ran a scientific analysis of blood leads, which showed the incidence of elevated blood lead increased by 300% for children living in the neighborhoods with the highest lead in water. So, it now seems that many Flint children were lead poisoned from consuming the city water, before the Walters and others became involved to stop it. I shudder to think of the additional damage that would have been done to innocent children in Flint without their sacrifices.

In my 25 years of working as a professor, I think their actions qualify as one of the most heroic and successful examples of community service, that I have ever personally encountered or even heard of. I will be telling their story in my classes for years to come, and I also hope to include it in a book I am writing about how normal people who make a profound difference in their communities. Meeting and working with Dennis and Lee-Anne has been an experience I will always treasure and remember.

Please contact me at 540-320-8740, if you have any questions about their extraordinary efforts and story. Or, just go to Google, and type in “Walters Flint water” to read for yourself, or “flint lead water” to read even more. It is quite possible, even likely, that nothing of what you read there, would have been exposed without the Walters exhaustive efforts. They truly are a great team, as I observed first hand when I stayed with them overnight last month-- Dennis quietly works behind the scenes and Lee-Anne serves as the public face. I am huge fans of their work and I give their community service my highest possible endorsement.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marc Edwards".

Marc Edwards
Charles Lunsford Professor of Civil Engineering