

ST. TAMMANY PARISH COUNCIL

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION COUNCIL SERIES NO: C-3504

COUNCIL SPONSOR: Mr. Binder

PROVIDED BY: Council Attorney

RESOLUTION URGING ADVANCE PUBLICATIONS TO RECONSIDER ITS DECISION TO DISCONTINUE DAILY PUBLICATION OF *THE TIMES-PICAYUNE* OR TO RECONSIDER ITS DECISION NOT TO SELL THE NEWSPAPER.

WHEREAS, in May, *The New York Times* broke the news that Advance Publications would publish New Orleans' storied *Times-Picayune* only three days a week. When *The Times-Picayune* shift takes place in October, New Orleans will be the largest city in the United States without a daily newspaper; and

WHEREAS, the change is reportedly being driven by the decline in advertising, the high costs of printing and its large newsroom staff. Steve Newhouse, chairman of Advance.net, the company's digital division, has defended the Web-first strategy after howls of protest in New Orleans about losing a daily *Times-Picayune*. "The rapid rise in digital adoption by consumers and advertisers is irreversible," Newhouse wrote in an Aug. 3 editorial for the Poynter Institute, a journalism school. "We are in the midst of a digital revolution and instead of constantly being disrupted by our numerous online competitors, we decided to re-invent ourselves."; and

WHEREAS, *The Times-Picayune* won't begin its three-day-a-week publishing schedule until October. It was recently announced that Advance will amend its plan and publish a Monday sports tabloid to cover New Orleans Saints football games. It was also announced that, with a three-day-a-week publishing schedule, its monthly subscription price will drop from \$ 18.95 to \$ 16.95. In May, when *The New York Times* broke the news, it was reported that Advance Publications would fire nearly half the staff and leave the remaining reporters and editors to focus on publishing news on its website; and

WHEREAS, the opposition and outrage over the transition at *The Times-Picayune* has been consistent, far reaching and from many fronts. The New Orleans City Council unanimously passed a resolution urging the owners of *The Times-Picayune* to keep publishing seven days a week. In a July 25th letter to Steve Newhouse, who is a member of the family that owns the newspaper; Tom Benson, owner of the beloved New Orleans Saints and the Hornets, proposed a meeting to discuss purchasing the paper with a group of investors. In a letter from Senator David Vitter, R-La., he urged the owners of *The Times-Picayune* to sell the paper. Senator Vitter made a point that he did not believe that the new model for *The Times-Picayune* would serve the region well and that the NOLA.com website was terribly inadequate. Joshua Benton, director of the Nieman Journalism Lab, reportedly said that "There's a part of me that wants to applaud them for trying something substantially different. But I don't have a lot of faith in Advance's ability to do anything worthwhile on the Web. Their sites are among the worst in newspaper journalism. Their sites are always broken. They're clunky. They all look like they were built in 1998."; and

WHEREAS, printing operations and delivery make up about 35 percent of an average newspaper's costs. But Poynter Institute reporter Rick Edmonds did an analysis in June of Advance's strategy in New Orleans. He found that cutting publishing days wasn't enough to realize meaningful savings, it took slashing the staff, too. In May, when *The New York Times* broke the news, it was reported that Advance Publications would fire nearly half the staff and leave the remaining reporters and editors to focus on publishing news on its website. It is doubtful that anybody at the paper would argue that there hasn't been a loss of reporting power. This must be considered in connection with the observation by Councilwoman Kristin Gisleson Palmer that fewer editions of the newspaper will be detrimental to the mission of the media, commonly referred to as the Fourth Estate; and

WHEREAS, the change is reportedly being driven by the decline in print advertising, the high costs of printing and its large newsroom staff. "The rapid rise in digital adoption by consumers and advertisers is irreversible," Newhouse wrote in an Aug. 3 editorial for the Poynter Institute, a journalism school. In contrast to this position, General Motors, the nation's third-largest advertiser, says it has stopped buying Facebook ads because they don't produce car sales. GM is only the latest company to question whether

Facebook, despite its 900 million users, is an effective use of advertising dollars. The following article on the expectations of digital advertising is noteworthy: By Jennifer Saba Thu Jun 7, 2012 3:01am EDT "(Reuters) -"As more newspapers cut back on print to reduce costs and focus on their websites, a troubling trend has emerged: online advertising sales are stalling. In the first quarter, digital advertising revenue at newspapers rose just 1 percent from a year ago, the fifth consecutive quarter that growth has declined, according to the Newspaper Association of America, a trade organization. A flood of excess advertising space, the rise of electronic advertising exchanges that sell ads at cut-rate prices, and the weak U.S. economy are all contributing to the slowdown, publishing executives and observers say. For an industry savaged by the erosion of print advertising dollars, significantly boosting digital revenue is necessary for survival. But the double-digit online growth rates that many newspapers used to enjoy – and on which their hopes for a prosperous future rest – could be a thing of the past."

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the St. Tammany Parish Council and St. Tammany Parish President, as the Governing Authority of St. Tammany Parish and duly elected representatives of the citizens and residents thereof, do hereby urge Advance Publications to reconsider its decision to discontinue daily publication of *The Times-Picayune* or to reconsider its decision not to sell the newspaper.

THIS RESOLUTION HAVING BEEN SUBMITTED TO A VOTE, THE VOTE THEREON WAS AS FOLLOWS:

MOVED FOR ADOPTION BY: _____ SECONDED BY: _____

YEAS: _____

NAYS: _____

ABSTAIN: _____

ABSENT: _____

THIS RESOLUTION WAS DECLARED ADOPTED ON THE 6 DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2012, AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL, A QUORUM OF THE MEMBERS BEING PRESENT AND VOTING.

MARTIN W. GOULD, JR., COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

THERESA L. FORD, COUNCIL CLERK