

# Adirondack Park Agency trying to tip the scales of justice

This just seems plain wrong to me! From a very young age, we've been taught to respect authority. This land of the free we all treasure so dearly was built on the concept of a judicial system that provided equality and fairness and was blind to the rich and powerful and governmental overreach. It's a simple concept that is known and understood worldwide.

Then why is Sandy Lewis being treated so unfairly? After proving in court and through appeal that the Lewis Family Farm in Essex was well within its right to construct housing for its workers, New York State now seeks to have the final chapter of this case removed from the record, as though it never took place.

Never took place? That's right, the state wants to pretend this case never happened. They want no record of their failure of driving the costs much higher than was needed and then removal all record of its reimbursement of those legal costs to the Lewis Fam-

ily Farm.

It's clear that the Adirondack Park Agency doesn't have an appetite for being told it was wrong. This outrageous move would be like the New England Patriots a few years back, after posting an undefeated season heading into the Super Bowl, and then after losing to the New York Giants in that final game, declaring the game never took place and remaining undefeated.

The arrogance of this move goes far beyond any definition of fairness or justice. In a nutshell, the state has now been told by the courts that they must reimburse the Lewis Family Farm for at least a portion of the legal expenses incurred defending themselves against the actions brought by the APA. Ah, but wait. The state wants



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one more chance to tip the scales of justice. Before any reimbursement is awarded, the record on making this payment must disappear. No removal, no check.

Is this fair or right? How do we teach those in our society to own up to their mistakes and learn from them if we allow our government agencies to run rough shot over its citizens and get away with it?

Let's face it, we paid for the government's action through our taxes. They have nothing personally to lose. What's the down side for them when someone has the nerve to challenge one of their rulings? They have the power and finances to bury a private citizen and, by attempting to remove or hide any portion of the public record, it send a very clear message ...

Don't mess with us!

When a child continues to steal and the only punishment is to give the item back to its rightful owner, if the owner can prove it was theirs to begin with, what lesson is learned? So long as you can get away with it, why not take everything you want anytime you want? The lesson learned is simple. Keep doing it until someone puts a stop to it and there is a level of punishment commensurate with the act.

Government must be held to the highest standard possible given its unlimited resources and when proven wrong, repeatedly, should face some sort of restrictions or censorship. They have no skin in the contest, and with nothing to lose, it only serves to empower them all the more. Gov. Andrew Cuomo says he wants to improve ethics at the state government level. This is the perfect time for the Governor to send a clear message that those of us living in the Adirondack Park have rights, too!

As citizens, we all owe a great deal

of gratitude to Sandy and Barbara Lewis for standing up to the APA and the State of New York. Very few among us would have or could have taken the actions they did, and that's what's at the root of this issue. The APA knows they can have their way, interpret the rules any way they see fit, and the average citizen has little choice but to cave in to their demands or risk losing everything.

It's time for the APA and the state to admit they were wrong and let effects of their actions remain on the record for all to know that they are not invincible. They must learn to deal with the average citizen in a fair, equitable way and not as the big bully they have proven to be time and time again.

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