



**Office of the County Executive
STEUART PITTMAN**

June 22, 2021

Open Letter to Alden Global Capital and all of its shareholders,

I am the County Executive of a place called Anne Arundel County in the heart of Maryland, where the 580,000 residents get local news from a little newspaper that you just bought, the Capital Gazette.

You got a gem. The paper started publishing as the Maryland Gazette in 1727. It's had a lot of owners and changed with the times, but it's always kept the people around here informed.

We've heard that you are bad news, that you buy papers like ours, lay off staff, cut local news coverage, and squeeze out whatever profit you can. We worried when we heard you were buying our paper's parent company, Tribune Publishing. We rejoiced when other investors stepped in with a competing offer, promising to preserve our paper and the Baltimore Sun under the oversight of a local nonprofit. But you won. That was a blow, but we're not ready to give up.

You see, our newspaper got attacked three years ago, by a guy with a shotgun who didn't like what the paper wrote about him. He killed five of our newspaper's staff as they worked in the newsroom. Their names were Gerald Fischman, Rob Hiaasen, John McNamara, Rebecca Smith, and Wendi Winters. They were our heroes. They didn't deserve to die.

On the day of the shooting, the surviving staff made a commitment. They refused to let that gunman shut down their newspaper. They kept working. A reporter named Chase Cook tweeted, "We are putting out a damn paper tomorrow," and they did. The newspaper arrived at our homes the next day, and every single day since.

Our paper's editor, Rick Hutzell, is also a hero. He's worked at the Capital for 34 years, and his knowledge of this county and his drive to tell us the truth are extraordinary. His editorial board endorsed the guy I was running against in the last election, but even I recognize that he is the heart of our paper, and that our paper is the heart of our community.

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We understand that you are a hedge fund, and that your purpose is to make money for your investors, but your investors are people, right? Do they know what you are doing with their money? Do they know that your first move as owner was to pressure our paper's staff to leave by offering buyouts? Do they know that your buyout offer, and the inherent threat of a pink slip, has already forced both Rick Hutzell and Chase Cook to announce their departure, and that others are likely to follow?

Your first strikes against us have left us staggering, but we are still standing.

You may not have noticed, but just as you take our journalists away, our paper is gearing up to cover the trial of the killer that attacked it. And just as you take our journalists away we are unveiling a memorial.

Let me tell you about the memorial that will be unveiled here next week. It was the brainchild of our Caucus of African American Leaders and is funded by the county, the city of Annapolis, and the state of Maryland. It has five pillars to honor our fallen heroes and a large wall with the words of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution inscribed on it.

We are calling it the Guardians of the First Amendment Memorial. It will inspire this community and all of its visitors to act in defense of a free and independent press, and to protect and preserve our local newspaper, whether the attacks come through the barrel of a gun or the greed of corporate raiders.

It's not too late for you to join us. Our paper is profitable. That's why you fought so hard to prevent The Baltimore Sun and Capital Gazette from being carved out of your acquisition. We can grow rather than die, allowing your investors to feel better about how Alden Global Capital invests their money.

To move us forward on this new path, I invite you to join us on June 28 at 11 am in Annapolis for the unveiling of our Guardians Memorial. After the event, you can meet with community leaders, elected officials, and Capital Gazette staff for a conversation about how we can protect local journalism as a career and the Capital Gazette as an institution.

I look forward to your response, and promise that your trip here will be informative and worthwhile.



Steuart Pittman
County Executive

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