



# The Frontier Reporter

Summer/Fall  Edition 2025

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## Q&A with Adam Zyglis on political targeting and threats

In July, News political cartoonist Adam Zyglis attracted the ire of local Republican politicians for his cartoon addressing catastrophic Texas flash floods in the general context of governmental help for natural disasters. Through an organized campaign, local Republican operatives were able to attract national attention that led to threats of violence against Zyglis and his family. Months later, Zyglis reflects on this incident in a conversation with News editorial writer and Guild member Elizabeth Licata.

*Licata: What was the concept for the cartoon and how did you decide on the imagery?*

Zyglis: My takeaway from the flash floods in central Texas was that we are experiencing these natural disasters more frequently due to climate change and at a time when we are eliminating government's role in helping people. FEMA is being gutted, and the argument is that it should be up to the states to take care of these victims. And the backdrop for this discussion of the role of government goes back to the Reagan argument, that government is the problem, not the solution.

Natural disasters are nonpartisan. They affect everyone: Republicans and Democrats alike. These are times when we need the government to help us. In the cartoon, which shows everything being washed away, you have someone in a MAGA hat asking for help because they need help. And the argument, in a word bubble, that government is the problem, not the solution - that is being swept away as well. I was making an editorial point about this long-standing argument. When it posted, the cartoon was quite popular and got a typical response. I got about 1,000 likes on Instagram and mainly positive comments.

*L: But a day or two after it posted on July 7, everything changed.*

Z: It was around July 9 when things blew up, and the catalyst seemed to be Michael Kracker, chairman of the Republican Party of Erie County, who put out a statement that was sent to prominent Republicans around the state. People like Rep. Elise Stefanik and Stefan Mychajliw (former Republican Erie County Comptroller) were using the same phrases Kracker used in the statement and then I noticed that same specific language in posts from giant accounts on X and other social media. Then Fox News ran a story. This was not like a typical cartoon response. It felt like a campaign.

And then I started getting more emails and it exploded pretty quickly. I was doxxed, with my phone number and address given out on social media and at one point I was getting so many phone calls I had to turn off my phone. I couldn't use it. There were just dozens and dozens of messages and posts and replies on social media - too many for me to really even keep track of - saying things like I should no longer be employed, and also that I should no longer be alive, insinuating that they're going to find me. I was getting anonymous emails with pictures of my kids.

*L: A Guild event at the Buffalo History Museum meant to highlight your exhibition there had to be canceled, but, more seriously, News management and the Guild had to step in to help make you and your family safe.*

Z: The News was generous, moving into action and helping with private security and a security expert who walked me through protecting all my private information. They paid for a security detail at the house and helped me get to the right channels with

the Buffalo police and the FBI in terms of reporting all this to them in hopes that they do something.

And the News editors were great. They told me that the cartoon had been completely fair, that I was doing my job and had nothing to apologize for. I had shown them the draft and there had been no pushback at all. Even some of my regular critics didn't think I deserved what was happening.

The Guild was very supportive, keeping in constant touch with me and alerting me to things I needed to watch out for. And the Guild was also very generous, stepping in after the News had done all it could with the security detail. The Guild was insistent that I should have a better security system with upgraded cameras and AI capabilities and they paid for it.

*L: It's now about four months after the incident. Have things gone back to normal? How do you feel about continuing to hit hard on important issues?*

Z: The actions of the Guild have, in a real, material sense, enabled me to continue to work as best I can without fear and hesitation. As for my content, I think it's always been about picking and choosing targets and knowing when to really hit hard. I try to mix up the subject matter and the tone of my work, knowing that there will continue to be astroturfing campaigns, campaigns of intimidation. This is part of a playbook that is employed now.

If you're putting out strong work that's speaking truth to power, or that's addressing touchy issues in bold ways, you're going to ruffle feathers to the point where some people will get offended. This incident was markedly different, partly because it was a very well-organized push to get me fired and worse, it was enabled by elected officials. And it came at a time when we are seeing crackdowns on free speech.

Knowing that I have no control over that, and that I couldn't really have seen this coming makes me realize that the only thing I can do is continue being me.

## Lee announces more News job cuts as fiscal year ends while we push our “Protect Local Journalism” campaign

*By Sandy Tan* – September is a bad month for papers owned by Lee Enterprises, as the company closes out its financial year. The company dropped another round of drastic cuts on its news organizations, and as everyone knows by now, The Buffalo News was not spared.

Editor Margaret Kenny announced to the staff in September that four-to-five Guild members would need to take a voluntary, severance-based buyout or face layoffs in order for the company to meet its financial requirements for this year.

Given the fact that so many Guild members close to retirement age have already taken buyout incentive offers in recent years, including five just last year, the likelihood that the newsroom will be able to stave off layoffs appears unlikely.

### Early impact

Two Guild members, including part-time copy editor Mike Pesarchick and Hamburg Sun reporter Caitlyn Stair, have already been laid off. Other newsroom staffers who have decided to leave or retire are already counted toward The News' savings and have no effect on the layoff number. A few members of the News' marketing and IT departments were also laid off.

Kenny said other cost-cutting measures, including the cancellation of the New York Times wire service, have already been taken. In addition, Lee announced that nearly all remaining newspapers that still print seven days a week will no longer print on Mondays starting in November.

### Guild response

The Guild leadership team is working conscientiously to make it as easy as possible for those potentially interested in taking a buyout to receive all the assistance they need to make an informed decision.

As drastic cost-slashing directives slam newspapers across the Lee chain, we notice that earlier promises by Lee to invest in its digital platform and resolve longstanding glitches that bar subscribers from being able to easily access newsroom content continue to plague The News website and app.

We work for a parent company that has no ability to successfully raise revenue or grow subscribers. We don't just have a destructive corporate owner. We have a clueless one.

### Taking action

It's clear that Lee's out-of-touch leadership team doesn't have what it takes to save us. But we can fight to save ourselves. The Guild will press for more responsible ownership and leadership and continue to raise our voices in the community about what's at stake.

Given our history with Lee, the Guild has taken proactive steps to grow community awareness about the threats facing local journalism.

This fall, the Guild officially launched the community campaign to “Protect Local Journalism” with both its event to honor Adam Zyglis' exhibit at the Buffalo History Museum in September and its

public forum on “The Future of Local Journalism” in the Burchfield Penney Art Center on Oct. 1.

The Guild-moderated public forum featured representatives from the Guild, WIVB, Investigative Post and BTPM. The event was well

received by audience members, who asked worthwhile questions to all panelists.

More public events will be scheduled in the coming months.



### Major Guild happenings since the Spring Edition

- **June 2025** – Guild members march in the Buffalo Pride Parade for the second year in a row, this time with special shirts and a Guild Pride flag. Guild members promote their “Protect Local Journalism” message by staffing a table at the Allen West Festival again this year, with some fielding complaints about ongoing access issues to The Buffalo News.



*Guild members participate in the Buffalo Pride Parade for the second year*

- **July** – Anger over a controversial editorial cartoon by Guild member Adam Zyglis, involving victims of the Texas flooding, leads local Republicans to launch a vindictive public campaign against Adam, which is picked up nationwide, resulting in threats against Adam and his family. A Protect Local Journalism campaign kick-off event at the Buffalo History Museum scheduled for July is abruptly postponed for safety reasons and rescheduled. The Executive Committee agrees to help cover the cost for Adam’s improved home security system. Guild also hosts a Buffalo Bisons group outing.
- **August** – The Buffalo History Museum event is rescheduled and held successfully as a private, RSVP-only event on Aug. 7, just days before Adam Zyglis’ editorial cartoon exhibit is taken down.
- **September** – Guild members once again marched in the Labor Day Parade. The Guild’s rescheduled summer picnic is held on Sept. 20. Newsroom management hires general-assignment and sports reporters days before Lee Enterprises announces job cuts across the chain as its fiscal year ends. The Buffalo News subsequently announces severance-based buyouts offered for four-to-five full-time Guild members. After 45 days, if not enough members take the buyout, newsroom layoffs will begin. Hamburg Sun reporter Caitlyn Stair and part-time copy editor Mike Pesarchick, both Guild members, are laid off. Other layoffs occur in marketing and IT departments at The News. Hamburg Sun Editor Chris Graham, sole remaining Sun journalist, joins the Guild.





*Guild members march in the Labor Day Parade*

## Comings & Goings from The Buffalo News/Hamburg Sun

### Comings:

Jamal Harris, Editorial  
Marquel Slaughter, Editorial - Sports  
Chris Graham, Editorial/Hamburg Sun editor

### Goings:

Mike Pesarchick, Editorial, part time  
Caitlyn Stair, Editorial/Hamburg Sun reporter

## Upcoming meetings

Executive Committee meetings are currently scheduled for the remainder of 2025 as follows: Nov. 10; Dec. 8.

The next general membership meetings are currently scheduled for Nov. 19. For the most up-to-date meeting schedule, visit: [buffaloguild.org](http://buffaloguild.org)

## Meeting minutes

*These approved meeting minutes in the Frontier Reporter are slightly edited and abridged. To view full minutes, visit [buffaloguild.org](http://buffaloguild.org), select "Meeting Minutes" tab and enter the password. If you need the password, email [aaron.besecker@gmail.com](mailto:aaron.besecker@gmail.com)*

### Executive Committee Meeting Minutes: April 14, 2028

**Attendance:** Natalie Brophy, Jon Harris, Jason Kremblas, Kim Leiser, Rachel Lenzi, Sandy Tan, Steve Watson, Rick Wiorkowski, Trey Wydysz

**Absent:** Aaron Besecker, Eric Bridenbaker, Mike Harrington, Libby March, Ben Tsujimoto

*Pre call-to-order discussion about vacation schedule policy carried over from grievance committee meeting*

### Call to order at 5:15

**Approval of minutes:** Harris moves to approve. Wiorkowski seconds. Approved

### President's Report - Harris

We are past most cyberattack issues. Expenses are being paid for members. Credit card interest has been paid for members. Berkshire Hathaway waived the interest payment on its loan to Lee in April.

Lee has been laying off employees. Open jobs waiting to be filled and Sean Kirst's job (after his retirement) will be cut. I don't know about Mark Gaughan's position.

Investor David Hoffman is still considering a bid. He mentioned in an article that the biggest newspapers are the least attractive part of Lee Enterprises. Part of the reason is "legacy liabilities," which we take to be union contracts. If Hoffman buys Lee and it is an asset sale, he does not have to honor union contracts. If it is a stock sale, he does.

Lenzi: Asks for clarification of the Lee cuts in regard to Deb Sur's open GA position, Kirst's position and Gaughan's position.

Harris: The status of Gaughan's position is unclear. I don't think they intend to fill the position immediately.

Guild members ask about status and potential jurisdiction issues related to long-vacant Editorial Page editor position.

### Mobilization Report - Harris

We have a happy hour Thursday (4/17) at Eugene V. Debs Hall. The Waterkeeper cleanup is April 26. There are still 14 out of 50 spots available.

**Grievance Report - Watson**

We plan to file a grievance related to vacation schedule posting in the district manager ranks. Expense report issues have calmed down, even the wrinkle with the missing weeks.

Brophy: How does the vacation schedule work? Refers to requests rejected.

Leiser: It should be picked by seniority. The most senior member picks their vacation weeks, then the schedule passes to the next most senior member. By March, the schedule should be picked and posted. However, it is not happening this way, except in digital and sports.

Watson to speak with Bruce Andriatch.

Watson clarifies retiree Mark Sommer’s role. He has been writing a lot for Gusto, which has always had a lot of freelancers, and he will continue to freelance Gusto stories. In regard to the Covid-19 stories. He pitched two stories and was approved. There were also 2 stories of his that were published after he left, but he filed before.

Tan: Freelancers don’t have total control over what stories they can write. Editors can and should refuse a pitch that can be done by a newsroom staffer.

Leiser: This is a tricky situation, but these freelance pitches still need to be run by reporters.

Harris: Let’s follow up with Margaret Kenny when she gets back from vacation.

**Old Business**

**Office Update**

Leiser: We are officially out of the old office space, and everything is in storage. Do we need physical address insurance? The movers cost \$2,000. The monthly storage rate is \$180 a month. We are saving a considerable amount of money.

**New Business**

**Meeting with the District Managers**

Harris: We want to schedule a meeting with the DMs about their issues. What mornings would work?

Kremblas: We could make Saturday mornings work.

Leiser: Would it be easiest to poll zone officers to get a consensus on the best day?

Wiorkowski: We will get back to you.

Tan: Do you have a sense of how members in the DM ranks feel in the wake of the cyberattack?

Wiorkowski: Happy when talking to me about what the Guild is doing to help. Angry with Lee.

Kremblas: Same in the south office.

Wiorkowski: I’m making sure everyone got paid for when Lee tried to make everyone use an inclement weather day on Day 1 of the cyberattack.

**Pride Parade Budget**

Registration cost \$54. The Guild has reimbursed Licata for the cost.

Tan: We want to buy a retractable Banner that says “Protect Local Journalism” and multicolored bracelets. Bracelets are priced at \$375 for 500 and \$585 for \$1000. The banner is \$700, and the design is free.

Leiser: We should also get Pride specific t-shirts.

Tan: Shirts are \$500 for 30.

Leiser: Motion to authorize the Mobilization Committee to spend up to \$2000 on mobilization materials. Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

**Executive Committee Meeting: June 9, 2025**

**Attendance:** Aaron Besecker, Natalie Brophy, Mike Harrington, Jon Harris, Jason Kremblas, Kim Leiser, Rachel Lenzi, Dave Robinson, Sandy Tan, Steve Watson, Rick Wiorkowski, Trey Wydysh, Ben Tsujimoto

**Absent:** Bridenbaker, March

**Meeting called to order at 5:05 p.m.**

Tan motioned to approve general membership meeting minutes. Wiorkowski seconded. Approved.  
Tan motioned to approve executive committee meeting minutes. Harrington seconded. Approved

**President’s Report - Harris**

Details from Lee’s quarterly earnings report: Lee suffered a \$12 million net loss. Digital is 53% of Lee’s revenue. Berkshire Hathaway has waived in interest payment on its loan to Lee for the month of May.

The News is planning on hiring a general assignment and a college/high school sports reporter

40K people were affected by the cybersecurity attack that hit Lee, mainly employees and their beneficiaries. Lee is providing free monitoring through IDX and employees have until Sept. 3 to enroll.

Open jobs not yet posted, follow-up with Margaret Kenny suggested.

**Grievance Report - Watson**

We are planning on filing grievances on some of these tech related issues. We need these problems to be fixed in order to do our jobs.

Leiser: An overarching grievance to cover all these issues - problems with emails, jump drives - a violation of Article 15 of the contract.

Watson: Effects bargaining is happening over the issue of all emails older than 2 years being deleted.

Leiser: Margaret will send an email and everyone has 2 months to save emails onto a flash drive before they disappear. Everyone who needs to do this will be on an exemption list. You can do it on work time, but no overtime.

Harrington: Will the Canada access be included in their grievance?

Leiser: Yes

Lenzi: Can we bypass with a VPN?

Leiser: Yes, but this falls under having the tools to do your work (Article 15).

Tan: Can we send a notice about what we are doing about this to our members?

Wydysh: Issues with Canada access needs to be communicated to everyone so we can take care of it.

Leiser: Management is already pushing back on this issue.

Schedule posting: There have been conversations with Bruce and Amy Yakawiak about getting schedules out farther ahead of time. We are seeing improvements, but we are ready to file a grievance if they backslide.

Erik Brady’s work - Good news/bad news. A couple columns have been rejected, but there are concerns about his article on the Josh Allen/Hailee Steinfeld wedding. It’s an issue of him covering live news vs. expats/nostalgia.

**Mobilization Report - Besecker**

Thank you to everyone who participated in the pride parade. We still need volunteers for the Allen West festival.

There is a happy hour planned for July 10 at the Buffalo History Museum to showcase Adam Zyglis’ exhibit.

Tan: It is a great way to launch our Protect Local Journalism outreach campaign. We also have a Protect Local Journalism forum planned for the fall.

**Old Business**

DM breakfast meeting: Wiorkowski says Saturdays are no good in the summer. During the week at 10:30 at the earliest or at noon would work best.

Kremblas: Please give us advance notice, so we can make sure we can attend whatever day works best.

Leiser: If we have to schedule two meetings, that’s what we’ll do.

**New Business**

We plan to make a donation to an LGBTQ fund to honor former Guild member Andrew Z. Galarneau’s daughter, who died May 15.

Tan motions to donate \$100 to an LGBTQ organization and send a card to AZG. Wydysh seconds. Motion approved.

The Sector Conference and CWA Convention from Aug. 8-12. We can send three delegates to the sector conference and one to CWA.

Leiser: We should pick our delegates ASAP, and we need to approve sending a delegation. Makes motion to approve. Wydysh seconds. Motion passes

There will be a general membership meeting on Wednesday, June 11. There will be a presentation of the Lee financial report and a discussion of the cybersecurity attack fallout.

Meeting adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

**General membership meeting, June 11: 2025**

Call to order at 12:35 p.m.

**President’s report - Harris**

Lee has released its 2Q results. Print ad revenue down, digital ad revenue down, print subscriptions down, digital subscriptions up.

Digital makes up 53% of revenue, but total digital revenue is up only marginally.

Lee’s operating expenses are down, and they had a net loss of \$12 million. They have a heavy debt load and only \$5 million on the balance sheet. Total 2Q operating revenue was \$137 million, minus the revenue affected by the cyber security incident.

Ruberto: What was the debt when Lee first bought the paper?

Harris: \$576 million

Tan: Have we heard any more out of Hoffman (investor interested in acquiring Lee).

Harris: Not at this point.

Shuman: Will there be any more cost reductions?

Harris: About \$30-\$40 million in annualized cost reductions so far this year. Many cuts in Omaha. Some costs here were the administrative assistant. Sean Kirst’s position was cut after his retirement. Lee will sell another \$25 million in real estate this year.

**Grievance Report - Watson**

We are trying to get everyone square with their access issues due to the recent tech migration. We will file a grievance to tie up the loose ends. It violates Article 15 of the contract, which states that Lee must provide us the tools necessary to do our jobs.

Members can talk to Steve Watson of Kim Leiser about grievance issues.

We are bargaining the effects of the 2-year email deletion. Lee won’t go back on it, but we will get a warning email about backing up old emails, and people will be put on an exemption list so they have time to back up the emails to a flash drive.

Shuman and Epstein: Will they purge emails already downloaded out of the system, and will they purge daily after the September deadline?

Leiser and Harris: We don’t know.

Erik Brady issues: They persist. Bruce has turned down columns, but there are still complaints about Brady stepping on other reporters’ toes.

Scheduling issues: They are getting better both in the newsroom and the DM ranks.

**Mobilization report - Besecker**

Volunteers are needed to work the table at the Allen West festival.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Pride festival.

There will be an event July 10 at the Buffalo History Museum for Adam Zyglis’ exhibit.

We are also planning a summer picnic, participation in the Labor Day parade and a possible panel discussion at the Burchfield Penney Art Center.

Harris: We are also planning kickball nights on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. at Conway Park.

**Cyberattack Letters**

Members will be provided a year of free credit monitoring from IDX. Some newer employees have not received letters confirming that their information was compromised. Lee is not sure everyone has been compromised, but they are covering their bases.

Harris: I wouldn't mind asking Lee to sit down with employees.

Question about how law enforcement investigation still ongoing. Answer unclear.

Guild members discuss the impact that Tom Wiley's departure has on The News' leadership structure and the weakening of outreach of the business community. Guild members ask about status of hiring a new general assignment reporter.

Harris: Management plans to go back to the finalists from the last time the position was open. Money is approved for hiring a GA reporter.

Member asks for update on the pension fund transfer. No update yet provided from the company.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

**Guild executive committee meeting: July 14, 2025**

**Attendance:** Wydysh, Leiser, Harris, Harrington, Besecker, Tan, Robinson, Wiorkowski

**Absent:** Brophy, Bridenbaker, Kremblas, Tsujimoto

**Call to order at 5:34 p.m.**

Harris motions to approve executive committee meeting minutes from June 11. Besecker seconds. Approved. Harris motions to approve general membership meeting minutes with approved changes. Besecker seconds. Approved.

**Mobilization Report - Besecker**

We are working on getting details together for our event at the Burchfield Penney Art Center.

**Grievance Report -Watson**

We have reserved a spot for the summer picnic on Aug. 16. If we want to have a group at the Labor Day parade, we must register by August 31.

We filed a grievance over the issue of not having access to our email and teams in Canada. Please let the Guild know if you have issues accessing any websites you need to use for your work.

Re: the latest Don Paul issue over his column conflicting with Guild work. The process was supposedly followed to make sure it didn't conflict with a story being written by Mackenzie that week.

Tan: We could and should object.

**New business**

Summer picnic: Questions about logistics and food.

Harris: We should put the word out about the picnic now.

Tan: We should check the vacation schedule to see how many members are on vacation at that time.

Leiser: We need to approve a budget for this tonight

Harris: We generally budget up to \$500

Wydysh motions to spend up to \$500 on the picnic. Besecker and Tan second. Approved.

Guild members discuss upcoming Buffalo Bisons group outing and using event as opportunity to say goodbye to newsroom interns..

Besecker makes a motion to spend up too \$300 on tickets. Watson seconds. Approved.

**Adam Zyglis security**

Leiser: The Guild office has gotten some appalling messages. The News approved 24-hour security for Adam, but it will run out. The security company recommended that he upgrade his home security system, but The News won't pay for it. I propose spending \$5,000 or half the cost of an upgrade to his home security. Adam is currently getting quotes and will report them to the Guild.

Leiser motions to spend \$5,000. Robinson seconds and adds that public acknowledgement should be made that the Guild is helping, and The News refuses.

Leiser: The News is helping otherwise.

Lenzi: We need to hear from The News that they have their employees' backs. We need to protect all of us. Maybe we should give our members a refresher on security and how to protect themselves.

Tan: I think it is appropriate to call on the News to help. We can call on the news via a non-public resolution.

Leiser: Adam is willing to pay a monthly subscription fee, not an initial outlay. The News paid for 24-hour security for 10 days.

. Full resolution: To spend up to \$5,000 on security for Adam. Motioned by Leiser. Seconded by Robinson. Amended by Watson. Seconded by Tan.

Guild members discuss a resolution asking The News to recognize the Guild's contribution to Adam's security and implore The News to continue by contributing to the outlay for a security system upgrade or the monthly subscription payment and issue a statement of support for Adam and his work and condemn threats of violence against Adam or any journalist at The News.

Committee members discuss the obligation of The News management to say something publicly or at least internally to its own employees, condemning threats.

Tan makes motion for Harris to request a sit down with Margaret Kenny regarding Executive Committee resolution. Wydysh seconds. Approved.

Tan: Adam still wants to have an event at the museum

Lenzi: It should be invite only, and an RSVP should be required.

Harris: If we do it this month, it should be a private event, with a limited pool of supporters that Adam can vouch for.

Tan: I will follow up with Adam and Melissa from the museum.

**GA Reporter Update**

Guild members discuss update on plans to hire for general assignment and sports beats.

Meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.