Earlier this week, Tribune Publishing announced a "management transition." We would like to share what we found after reading it – numerous inconsistencies and conflicting statements.

Tribune Publishing Announces Management Transition

CHICAGO, February 3, 2020 /PRNewswire/ – Tribune Publishing Company (NASDAQ: TPCO), one of the nation's leading media companies, today announced a leadership transition plan that will continue a strategic effort to streamline the company's operations and position it for the future. The changes are effective today.

- Terry Jimenez, the company's Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, will assume the role of President and Chief Executive Officer and join the Board, succeeding Timothy P. Knight, who has stepped down from the Board and will leave the company at the end of February.
- Philip G. Franklin, Chairman of the Tribune Board's Audit Committee, will become Non-Executive Chairman of the Board, succeeding David Dreier, who will step down as Non-Executive Chairman but will remain on the Board.
- Mike Lavey, current Controller and Chief Accounting Officer, has been named interim Chief Financial Officer.

"These changes are a natural transition as Tribune Publishing works to reduce its corporate and back- office costs and streamline its real estate footprint," Mr. Dreier said. "Phil and Terry both have strong financial and operational backgrounds, which are extraordinarily valuable."

"This past year we have been focused on stabilizing Tribune financially so that we can continue to invest in quality, local journalism, which is the key to the company's long-term success," Mr. Knight said. "Thanks to the combined efforts of our newsrooms and our digital-product and digital-consumer- marketing groups, our digital-only subscriptions and associated revenue increased significantly in 2019. Tribune is in a solid position to continue its transformation and Terry is the right person to lead the company at this stage. I look forward to working with him as we transition responsibilities over the next month."

Mr. Jimenez said he will build on the company's recent accomplishments. "We will continue working to position the company to navigate the industry-wide challenges while continuing to serve our communities with high-quality journalism. We are committed to delivering high-quality products to our customers and clients while also continuing to improve the financial results and value of the company," Mr. Jimenez said.

Mr. Franklin said the company is in a strong position. "Under Tim's leadership, Tribune Publishing has made solid progress in 2019 and, as a result, the company has a strong balance sheet and is well positioned to continue growing its digital subscriber base. We will continue to focus our resources where they matter most – on our employees and the journalism they produce."

Mr. Dreier said he believes Tribune Publishing will continue to be a leader in the news industry. "Tribune Publishing is a leader in each of our eight markets, providing quality, locally focused journalism," Mr. Dreier said. "I am confident this will continue under Terry and Phil's leadership. We have a shared belief that solid journalism enhances shareholder value. That will continue to be our driving principle."

Tribune says this on a Monday, and then on Tuesday its new CEO says "we must do some things differently in order to be a leading profitable media company." So are we or are we not a leading media company?

When Trib Pub talks about streamlining, they mean cutting jobs for the people who put together the newspaper every day. They mean less investment in newsrooms and the communities those newsrooms serve.

They talk about this like it's inevitable. But it isn't. We deserve reinvestment of our newsrooms' profits, and that isn't asking too much of our parent company.

Is it reducing corporate costs to keep paying your now former CEO Tim Knight through the length of his contract – Jan. 31, 2022 – per his employment contract with the company? It must be nice to have a contract. (source: 2019 proxy filing)

... such as selling off the few things of tangible value, including an 82-year-old downtown newsroom for less than the asking price and leaving workers in limbo as to where they might move.

We're sure that Mr. Jimenez and Mr. Franklin are fine human beings. But, we're concerned that the part of Mr. Franklin's background that's being touted is his former role as CFO of OmniQuip International "a private equity sponsored roll up in the construction equipment industry."

A roll up strategy, according to corporatefinance.com is "the process of acquiring and merging multiple smaller companies in the same industry and consolidating them into a large company."

Tribune was about as stable as it could get coming into 2019 after its sale of The LA Times and San Diego Union Tribune left it with more than $200 million in profit and less debt, paid off with the sales proceeds.

Tribune saved $18.1 million in employee compensation costs in 2018 and laid off/bought out 840 workers.

It doesn't appear much if any of that savings went toward continuing to "invest in quality, local journalism," since, instead, the company paid out cash dividends to shareholders totaling $65 million and has balked at its unions' attempts to better working conditions including raises at newspapers where there haven't been any in years.

It is also once again offering buyouts to its staff under the threat of future layoffs if they don't get enough volunteers. Quality, local journalism is the result of more staff with years of experience, not fewer.

This is great to hear – the company is in strong financial shape to reinvest in our newsrooms and sustain the journalism that serves our readers and communities. We hope TribPub's actions begin to align with their words.

Unless, of course, quality journalism interferes with profit margins. Then they'll cut and cut again.

Do you, though? We proposed a shareholder resolution to the company that would have required it to prove its commitment to journalism, but Tribune is challenging it.

Here's what they don't want to do and what we asked for: "Shareholders request that the Board of Directors prepare an annual 'journalism report' detailing the company's commitment to its core product – news. Available to investors, this report should be prepared at reasonable cost, omitting proprietary information, and consider the relative benefits and drawbacks of the Company's approach to journalistic integrity as determined at the judgment and discretion of the Board of Directors and management."

By the guilds of Tribune Publishing: Baltimore Sun Guild, Chesapeake News Guild, Chicago Tribune Guild, Hartford Courant Guild, The Morning Call Guild and Tidewater Media Guild