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Ethanol plant officials offer media apology

By **KARA WILLIAMSON, Times Leader Staff Writer**

MANAGING MEMBERS of Harrison Ethanol LLC, Wendel Dreve and Marion Gilliland issued a formal apology for reporters being asked to leave a public meeting held last week.

The informational session was scheduled to take place last Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at Harrison Lakeland Elementary. The meeting was held to help farmers understand the potential benefits of ethanol and was sponsored by the Lakeland Young Farmers.

As the meeting began, Gary Wilson, member of Harrison Ethanol's steering committee and speaker for the ethanol meeting, told reporters they were not allowed to take notes or use tape recorders.

In addition to The Times Leader, reporters from the Harrison News Herald, Daily Jeffersonian, and The Times Reporter also attended the meeting.

When a member of the media objected Wilson's orders, he said, "You are free to leave."

The letter from Gilliland and Dreve stated, "On Thursday, we made a mistake. A meeting was hosted by the Harrison Central Future Farmers of America and the Lakeland Young Farmers. The meeting was held to answer the agricultural community's technical questions about opportunities for farmers when the Harrison Ethanol project becomes operational. Topics were expected to include the size and shape of hay bales, the amount of grain required, and similar topics of interest to potential participants in the ethanol project."

"A problem arose when Gary Wilson, a representative of Harrison Ethanol, asked reporters not to take notes or record the meeting. Although we were not present, we understand that this resulted in the departure of the media representatives who were in attendance."

"This was a public meeting, held in a public building. The media were notified of

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the meeting. They had every right to attend and report on what transpired."

"The support of the community and the media has been and continues to be critical to the success of the Harrison Ethanol project. We regret that several years of building relationships with the people of Harrison County and the media serving them may have been jeopardized. We sincerely apologize to the media representatives who attended the event."

Chris Copeland, executive director of the Harrison County Community Improvement Corporation said, "This was an unfortunate event, one that I hope can be put behind us now."

"I hope we can all continue to work together to benefit the community and move this project forward," Copeland stated.

Dreve told The Times Leader that it was an unfortunate event that should not have occurred and in the future, he said he hopes to keep everyone informed of Harrison Ethanol's progress.

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