



Charles Marohn <marohn@strongtowns.org>

Transfer to Retired Status

1 message

Charles Marohn <marohn@strongtowns.org>

Fri, May 20, 2022 at 3:00 PM

To: aelslagid@state.mn.us

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Dear Board Members,

Today I write to you to request that my license be placed in “retired” status consistent with Minnesota Statute 326.02, Subdivision 1, effective immediately.

I take this action reluctantly. As you are aware, I have not practiced engineering for more than a decade, but I have maintained my license—including the required continuing education—as part of my commitment to the profession. I earned my engineering license and am dedicated to the practice of engineering. I am proud to be a licensed professional in the state of Minnesota.

Unfortunately, fellow licensed professionals have used the complaint process to attack me and the work that my colleagues and I do at Strong Towns. They have filed formal complaints with you about my writing, my speaking, and my organization’s advocacy. They have used my status as a licensee to harass me. It is unseemly that fellow professionals would seek to abuse the licensing process in this way.

Even more unseemly, however, is how the licensing board has enabled this abuse. As part of the lawsuit we are currently enjoined in, I was able to review the file you have on me. It was chilling to see the notes from your discussion over whether I had violated state law by questioning industry practice in street design, specifically in a situation where multiple people had been killed. This is not the kind of reaction a healthy profession has to dissent.

Sadly, not only have you enabled the abuse, in the last year you have joined it. The written arguments your legal counsel has made on your behalf offend me, and I suspect they would offend a great many licensed professionals. Claims that the title “Professional Engineer” and the initials “PE” are a trade name, the very use of which constitutes commercial speech in any circumstance, is inconsistent with how I understand my vocation. I suspect most of my fellow licensees similarly consider themselves public servants, not commercial entities whose competitive privilege is protected by a state cartel.

This board has slandered me, attesting to things in court documents that are false while, ironically, repeatedly calling me a liar and a fraud, insisting I worked to intentionally deceive the board and the public about credentials I was qualified and entitled to have. The obsessive passion in which you have pursued this injustice is not only revealing; it also undermines the credibility of all engineers.

My colleagues in the profession should know: I acknowledged I was late in renewing my license and, despite the fact that I performed no act that required licensure, I agreed to pay a fine in excess of that required by state statute, and even agreed to an unwarranted reprimand. That was not enough for the licensing board, which took up the campaign of my detractors and demanded that I also sign public documents admitting to dishonesty, misrepresentation, and fraud.

We all know that I am not guilty of any such offense, yet you are using the power of your position—the power of the state—to extract such an admission. The licensing board has lost its way. In this matter, it is serving the narrow interests of a handful of disgruntled license-holders, but it's not serving the profession, as a whole.

And it's not serving the public. As a Minnesotan, I'm ashamed.

By transferring to retired status, I am attempting to limit your ability, and the ability of those who nefariously enlist your authority, to attack me and the advocacy work we are doing at Strong Towns. I do this while retaining the ability to return to private practice someday.

In the meantime, I will continue to work to ensure that, if I do practice again, it will be in a profession that embraces open dialogue, is committed to reflection and self-improvement, and places public safety and the public good above its own power, position, and stature.

There is a lot of work to be done.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Marohn, Jr.

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Charles L. Marohn, Jr.

Engineer, Planner, Founder and President of Strong Towns

Author of [Strong Towns: A Bottom-Up Revolution to Rebuild American Prosperity](#) and [Confessions of a Recovering Engineer: A Strong Towns Approach to Transportation](#)

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