

Excerpts of below read/paraphrased at above meeting at 1st Public Comment by S. P. Mikowski.

This is a continuation of our concerns regarding the significant negative impact on Taxpayers, operations and staff caused by BOC's Clerk-Loathing decision (removal of Finance/Human Resources duties from Clerk) at May 11, 2021 Executive Committee. It has caused chaos with County Finances that's costing/will COST Taxpayers more than \$\$\$half-million DOLLARS to correct! This 2021/2022 Commission's (BOC's) **decision has wasted lots of resources and good will for 20 months of its 24 months of service(?)**. **Hundreds of \$\$\$thousands of Taxpayers' money wasted--cannot be recovered---with lots more to be wasted**. One can imagine the benefits of THIS BOC correcting its bad decision **immediately after May 11, 2021!** That's why THIS BOC must apologize to Clerk and Taxpayers...

We read Peter Westerman's 12/1/22 letter to the Editor of the Leelanau Enterprise regarding this decision per below:

Thursday, December 1, 2022 LEELANAU ENTERPRISE Section 1, Page 5

Dereliction in office?

To the editor:

I must be missing something. The persons hired for the Finance Department have been determined to be unqualified for their positions. Why were they hired in the first place? More behind-the-scenes hanky-panky?

Why don't the majority Democrats on the current Board simply dismiss the auditing firm for this "training" assign-

ment, dismiss the unnecessary employees, revert to the previous assignment of responsibilities for all county finance functions, and save the unnecessary expenditure for "training"?

In Scio Township, there is actually a problem to be addressed and concerned citizens are actively taking the Board of Trustees to task over apparent dereliction in office. Is that going to be necessary in

Leelanau County?
Peter Westerman
Lake Leelanau

Correction:

A name listed in a story regarding the appointment of the Village of Northport treasurer in the Nov. 24 edition was spelled incorrectly. Cindy Edmondson is the correct spelling.

This WSJ book review appears to apply to BOC's **Clerk-Loathing decision** at May 11, 2021 Executive Committee meeting causing chaos with County Finances that's COSTING/will COST Taxpayers more than \$\$half-million DOLLARS!
Excerpts of **below read/paraphrased at above meeting at 1st Public Comment** by S. P. Mikowski.

'Complicit' Review: Going Along, Avoiding Blame By Julian Baggini November 17, 2022

The world is not short of amoral opportunists. In the midst of **unethical conduct**, many of us are tempted to look the other way. *WALL STREET JOURNAL* (2 pages) 2022-11-17_wsjblame B

https://www.wsj.com/articles/esg-vanguard-capitalism-asset-manager-environment-11668550501?mod=Searchresults_pos1&page=1

Corporate malfeasance* is all too common** and hurts far more than a Corporate company's bottom line. Purdue Pharma's promotion of opioid use was, by one calculation, the single largest cause of the decrease in U.S. life expectancy during the mid-2010s. Separately, an estimated 45,000 disability-adjusted life years were lost as a result of the pollution from the Volkswagen diesel engines that, in 2008-15, had fraudulently passed emission tests.

When such scandals break, **the bad apples are quickly identified**. The Sackler family name—which used to adorn galleries and buildings that the family funded with wealth from Purdue's success—is mud. Oliver Schmidt, Volkswagen's emissions-compliance manager in the U.S., ended up in prison. But **to pin all the blame on the stand-out villains is too easy**. In "**Complicit**," the behavioral ethicist Max H. Bazerman argues that "**complicitors**"—his term for **people who enable wrongdoing without being active agents of it**—"always surround the most famous evil-doers." **More uncomfortably, he insists that complicitors include the likes of you and me.**

Complicity, Mr. Bazerman notes, comes in many forms, but **two stand out**. **First there are the "true partners"** whose goals and values strongly overlap with those of wrongdoers. The distributors of OxyContin, Purdue's addictive painkiller, wanted to increase sales as much as the manufacturer did. **Then there are the "collaborators" who have different goals and values from the major wrongdoers but are happy to aid and abet them for as long as it is expedient to do so.** For example, the unions and government of Lower Saxony had an interest in turning a blind eye to Volkswagen's cheating to further the interests of their members and tax coffers.

Such stories have become familiar, but in Mr. Bazerman's retelling the true scale of the misconduct becomes shockingly evident. He is scathing about what he bluntly calls Adam Neumann's WeWork "scam" and Elizabeth Holmes's Theranos fraud—and about those **who connived or colluded in each**. There is **little to learn** from these tales, he acknowledges, other than the fact that **the world is not short of amoral opportunists**.

More instructive are the accounts of what Mr. Bazerman calls "**ordinary complicity**," which may be **unwitting and unintentional but is still unethical**. We can, for instance, help create or maintain **unethical organizational structures**. Different actors in the pharmaceutical industry perpetuate the system by which doctors receive gifts and speaker fees from companies whose drugs they are then incentivized to prescribe. **Too many allow themselves to believe that their clinical judgment will not be affected by such freebies, though the evidence is clear that it is.**

Misfeasance: a transgression, especially the wrongful exercise of lawful authority.

*****Malfeasance:** wrongdoing, especially by a public official

Perhaps an even more interesting example is the tacit conspiracy to maintain the fiction that the people paid to conduct corporate audits are “independent” when they are clearly “biased to please their clients, and are affected by conflicts of interest.”

Two other forms of complicity play on our generally helpful desire to cooperate and provide mutual support. Any organization requires some deference to authority and loyalty, but in excess these lead to turning a blind eye at best and active support of wrongdoing at worst. Similarly, trust is good, but when we place too much of it in colleagues we shirk from challenging them when the flashing red lights should be unmistakable.

Mr. Bazerman candidly admits to his own complicity in a fraudulent academic paper, an ethical lapse he attributes to putting too much faith in a co-author's assurances that dodgy-looking data were sound. Even when it became evident they were bogus, his desire for harmony led him to sign off on a follow-up paper that acknowledged the flaws but was less critical than it should have been. He also believes he didn't fight hard enough to retract the original paper.

This and other occasions when Mr. Bazerman admits his own complicity might look like harsh self-flagellation: After all, his errors were all understandable and often driven by good motives. But that is the point. We have to be hard on ourselves and demand the highest standards because it is all too easy to drift into complicity and often very difficult to challenge malpractice.

We constantly have to fight psychological biases, logical failures and emotional weaknesses, Mr. Bazerman observes. We have an “omission bias” that makes us judge inaction more leniently than action, even when we are equally culpable. When we cause harm indirectly it seems less serious than when we do so directly, even though, again, we might be just as blameworthy. We can also slide imperceptibly down slippery slopes from minor peccadilloes to serious transgression. And then there is the pure fear of the consequences of calling out wrongdoing.

Mr. Bazerman's catalog of complicity is sobering. His explanations for why it happens are convincing, and toward the book's end he attempts to set out what we can do to counter it. **He advises trying to improve workplace processes and structures as well as workplace culture, a prescription that would have benefited from his telling us more about how exactly to do so.** He also encourages us to take strength in collective action, looking for allies who might also see that some-thing is wrong. Arguably the most important prophylactic is to spend more time clarifying what our moral values are and where our red lines are drawn. “Thinking through values and scenarios in advance increases the likelihood that we will reject and confront unethical behavior,” he argues, with research to back up the claim.

Even so, **the reader is left more depressed by how *easy and natural* it is to become a *complicitor* than heartened by the suggested strategies for avoiding becoming one. Perhaps leaders need ethics coaches as well as performance ones: just as long as these moral mentors are not given the incentives to justify rather than challenge the values and actions of their powerful clients.**

Mr. Baggini is the author of “How the World Thinks.”

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NOTE: Emphases of **bold**, *italic*, underline & background color --by spm