

Defendant's Statement Raises Points

Written by Steve Frank
Thursday, 09 January 2014 11:25

The now defendant in the case of three deaths at the Best Western Blue Ridge Plaza issued a statement through his attorney, Paul Culpepper, of Hickory, making a number of points that, if true, raise questions about the case. The press release, dated yesterday, says that Barry Damon Mallatere

is disappointed by the decision to press criminal charges, and makes claims that put blame not only on the firm hired to make changes to the pool heater that is being blamed in the deaths, but says the Town of Boone did inspect work at the Best Western and other hotels under the Appalachian Hospitality Management umbrella. The release said that AMH did have employees swap out the pool heater from the Sleep Inn to the Best Western in November of 2011, but within three months, contracted with Independence Oil and LP Gas to convert the pool heater to natural gas from propane. The release says that Independence Oil did the work even though the owner's manual said it should not be converted—and they claim a permit was issued by the Town of Boone and saying in the release, "it was allegedly inspected by the Town of Boone." The release does not state whether they have proof or any paperwork of that inspection. The release goes on to say that expert evaluation shows that the conversion was "not properly performed," and goes on to say that "several other appliances were improperly converted," and that "all these appliances were also inspected by the Town of Boone and passed inspection." We received a press release dated November 6th 2013 that Independence Oil and LP Gas sold its assets to Blue Ridge Energies. The Mallatere release goes on to point out that neither the Town of Boone nor police have issued any public warning about such work done by Independence Oil. Culpepper's office indicated that Damon Mallatere is out of town, and will turn himself in when he returns to the area. The Raleigh News & Observer is reporting that on Jan. 1, Hotel Equities, an Atlanta-based company, took over operations of the hotel group.

Photo: Facebook