

Mallatere Attorney Releases Proof of Town Permits

Written by Steve Frank
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While paperwork from the Town of Boone in the case against Barry Damon Mallatere has been locked away as part of the investigation, the now defendant's attorney provided some proof of their assertion that the town and another company bear some culpability in the deaths of three people last spring. The latest in the case of three deaths at the Best Western Blue Ridge Plaza saw Mallatere issue 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 Wednesday, 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. Yesterday, Culpepper's office provided me copies of the construction permit from Independence Oil and the inspection sign-off by the town of Boone. 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 the assets—not the company—of Independence Oil and LP Gas were purchased by 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.