

Subject: RE: Public Input & Council

Date: Mon, 14 Jan 2002 16:20:21 -0800

From: Don Bell <BellID@district.north-van.bc.ca>

To: "brian_platts@telus.net" <brian_platts@telus.net>, Don Bell <BellID@district.north-van.bc.ca>

CC: Bill Denault <bill_denault@dnv.org>, Doug Mackay-Dunn <doug_mackay-dunn@dnv.org>, Ernie Crist <ernie_crist@dnv.org>, Heather Dunsford <heather_dunsford@dnv.org>, Janice Harris <janice_harris@dnv.org>, Lisa Muri <lisa_muri@dnv.org>, NVD Council <dnvcouncil@dnv.org>, Allan Orr <allandorr@shaw.ca>, Annette Martin <annettem@digital-rain.com>, Bill Tracey <bill_tracey@telus.net>, Cathy Adams <cathyadams@canada.com>, Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>, Dave Sadler <davesadler@telus.net>, Eric Andersen <eric@seatrade.ca>, Felipe Grossling <felipeg@shaw.com>, John Hunter <johnhunter@idmail.com>, Liz James <cagebc@yahoo.com>, Peter Thompson <bedeconsulting@shaw.ca>, FONVCA <fonvca@fonvca.org>

Brian,

Thank you for putting your concerns in writing regarding my rulings in response to comments made by Council members and by members of the public.

I can assure you I strive to achieve fairness in responding as Mayor and Chair of the meeting to comments made by both Council members and the public. It is important that respect be shown to anyone speaking, and/or anyone referred to in comments made by a speaker, be that person a Council member, DNV management and staff, a person who serves as District appointee to advisory committees or commissions, or a member of the public. Comments should be directed to the issue being discussed, not the personalities of the individuals involved.

I have been preparing a report to Council with recommendations for a formal policy to be endorsed by Council to better clarify this principle, and I hope to have it ready for the January 28th Regular Council meeting.

I am presently reviewing the tapes of Saturday's Financial Plan Workshop and I will respond to you and others on this matter once I have completed that review.

Mayor Don Bell

-----Original Message-----

From: Brian Platts [mailto:brian_platts@telus.net]

Sent: January 12, 2002 7:46 PM

To: Don Bell

Cc: Bill Denault; Doug Mackay-Dunn; Ernie Crist; Heather Dunsford; Janice Harris; Lisa Muri; NVD Council; Allan Orr; Annette Martin; Bill Tracey; Cathy Adams; Corrie Kost; Dave Sadler; Eric Andersen; Felipe Grossling; John Hunter; Liz James; Peter Thompson; FONVCA
Subject: Public Input & Council

Mayor Bell:

Whenever a member of the public brings to your attention a complaint about Council or District Staff, you tell that person to put the complaint in writing. Well that is exactly what I am doing right now with this e-mail.

At today's Budget Workshop Mr. John Hunter made a very detailed and professional presentation. Upon conclusion of this presentation, Councillor Harris -- rather than thanking Mr. Hunter for coming to the District Hall on a Saturday to give his input based on his many years of business experience -- tried her best to discredit his argument that the District receives below market value for its land portfolio. Following on Councillor Harris' heels, Councillor Denault derisively made reference to the "flawed argument" put forward by Mr. Hunter. Despite this clearly disrespectful behavior directed towards a member of the public who was not in position to respond, you did nothing to correct it, Mayor Bell.

While the above is bad enough, the next speaker from the public, Mr. Corrie Kost, objected to the line of questioning by Councillor Harris and also Councillor Denault's "flawed argument" comment. When he calmly pointed out that in fact they were wrong and Mr. Hunter was right, both these petulant Councillors reacted with shouts of "POINT OF ORDER!!!" You in turn Mayor Bell, admonished not the two councillors, but instead directed your authority at Mr. Kost and told him to be "respectful" with his comments! Watching this disgraceful scene from the public gallery, it was all I could do to remain silent.

Why is it you tolerate certain councillors attacking the integrity of well-meaning citizens who come forward to participate in local government decision-making? On the other side, the least hint of provocation on behalf of a speaker results in hysterical calls for "POINT OF ORDER MAYOR BELL!!!" which you then use to frustrate legitimate comment. The only conclusion to be drawn is that in its application, there is a much higher standard of conduct that exists for members of the public than for the councillors themselves. This sort of tactic is nothing short of intimidation.

I have written to you before regarding this clear bias, but you did not respond. While I personally prefer a free debate and discussion, if you are going to demand such strict confines for the public, Mayor Bell, then it is about time that you held ALL councillors to this same standard.

Sincerely,
Brian Platts