

Subject: [Fwd: Conduct of Council meeting, District of North Vancouver, 17 June, 2002]

Date: Tue, 18 Jun 2002 17:12:05 -0700

From: Brian Platts <brian_platts@telus.net>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

For posting on web site.

Subject: Conduct of Council meeting, District of North Vancouver, 17 June, 2002

Date: Tue, 18 Jun 2002 23:42:49 +0100 (BST)

From: Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

To: "Mayor Don Bell, Members of Council" <mayorandcouncil@dnv.org>

CC: Dale Wall <dwall@hq.marh.gov.bc.ca>, Cathy Adams <cathyadams@canada.com>, Eric Andersen <eric_g_andersen@hotmail.com>, Maureen Bragg <m.bragg@shaw.ca>, John Hunter <johnhunter@idmail.com>, Federation of North Vancouver Community Associations <fonvca@fonvca.org>, Allan Orr <allandorr@shaw.ca>, Brian Platts <brian_platts@telus.net>, Dave Sadler <davesadler@telus.net>, Peter Thompson <bedeconsulting@shaw.ca>, Bill Tracey <bill_tracey@telus.net>, Angela Trudeau <a.trudeau@canada.com>

OPEN LETTER TO:

Mayor Don Bell, Councillors: Denault, Dunsford and Harris,
DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER,
Box 86218,
NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C. V7L 4K1

18 June, 2002

RE: CONDUCT OF DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER COUNCIL MEETING 17 JUNE, 2002

The manner in which the addressed members of Council conducted the June 17th Council meeting, and themselves, during discussion and vote on the Seymour Local Area Plan Agenda item was, in my opinion, absolutely appalling. It had not seemed possible for Council of the District to fall any lower than its previous rating at the "bottom of the heap" of municipalities across Canada, but it certainly happened last night.

Conduct of the meeting from the Chair demonstrated that after many terms on Council, the Mayor still has not mastered the rules by which Council should be run. Taken in chronological order, consider the following:

1. The usual public input session was dispensed with, at least at its usual place at the start of the meeting;
2. The Council meeting was not brought to order before discussions and subsequent voting commenced; or, if it was, that fact was lost in the melee of discussion around the Council table. Instead, the Mayor began by removing items 11 and 12 from the agenda, with no explanation to members of the community who were in the auditorium;
3. Still not having brought the meeting properly to order, at least not that anybody could hear, the Mayor announced the absence of Clr. Mackay-Dunn "due to illness" and then said, "Perhaps Council you might like to move deferral of Items 1 - the Seymour Plan - and 6 - Highway Encroachment - to a full Council."

In view of the fact that a dozen or so members of the community, who had volunteered a great deal of their time and effort to pull the Seymour Local Area Plan - Item 1 - together over a period of years, were in the audience to present the Plan seemed of little consequence to the Mayor or the above-noted councillors. Would the Mayor have asked for deferral had it been Clr. Crist or Clr. Muri absent? Moreover.....

4. The Mayor and councillors knew, or should have known, that deferral to the next full meeting of Council - on the spurious excuse that a letter had been received "just that day" asking additional questions - would, as Clr. Muri later pointed out, have the effect of putting incomplete information before the community at the scheduled Open Houses on the Plan. Further, it would defer Council discussion until after these meetings, thus giving taxpayers no opportunity to discuss Council's position on the Plan. Very clever.

Moreover.....

5. Even had the motion to defer been correctly and appropriately solicited and tabled, the Mayor knows perfectly well that there is to be no discussion on a deferral motion. Still, he allowed rambling discussion and questions and answers to be bandied around the table for over half an hour before he called for a vote on deferral, which carried 4 to 2, with Clrs. Crist and Muri against. This was an unbelievable abrogation of the democratic process. What is, perhaps, even worse, is that Clrs. Harris and Dunsford, though obviously embarrassed by the proceedings, nevertheless voted to defer.
6. Despite many people being signed up to speak in the non-existent public input, only one person at the back of the auditorium was asked if he wished to speak - *after* the vote to defer had passed. No-one else was asked if they wished to speak on any other topic.
7. Several things became apparent following the deferral vote and Clr. Muri's subsequent challenge to the Chair - which was defeated by the above-noted members of Council: (a) Clr. Denault who, despite protestations to the contrary, really finds public input a nuisance in his path, sat with a satisfied smile on his face; (b) members of the community who had just received a slap in the face by this farce were furious - as were Clrs. Muri and Crist; (c) Mayor Bell who, by this time, realized it hadn't been his shining moment was faced with having to announce the next item on the Agenda - a delegation from representatives of the GVRD who had witnessed the whole debacle!

Is it any wonder that North Vancouver District Council carries little, if any, weight? Not with some members of Staff, nor with an increasing number of District residents. Not at GVRD, not at UBCM, not at FCM nor, for that matter, at the provincial or federal levels. In fact, were all the facts known, it is more than likely that the District has become nothing but a laughing stock and this writer is furious about that. District taxpayers deserve much better and it is to be hoped that they will remember the record of these members of Council come election-time in November!

It is not known what, if any, immediate action might be taken by citizens of the Seymour area who were so unjustly used. For my part, I will:

- ask the Municipal Clerk to carefully review the tapes of the meeting to determine whether or not the meeting was, in fact, duly convened;
- view the Shaw Cable replay of the meeting this Saturday to make that determination for myself; and, if the meeting was **not** properly convened, then I will ask the Clerk to do whatever is necessary to determine whether the votes which were taken are, in fact, legal; and,
- send a copy of this letter to the Inspector of Municipalities to determine whether this manipulation of the Agenda, and its potential to affect the validity of the scheduled community discussion of the Seymour Plan, constitutes an abuse of public power by some members of Council.

Further action on my part will depend on the results of the above.

Regardless of how events evolve, I ask that this letter be accepted as it is intended - a considered and determined condemnation of those members of Council who, by their actions, have demonstrated a contempt for the democratic process and for the citizens they are paid to 'serve'.

Sincerely,

Liz James
Box 16090, 3017 Mountain Highway,
NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C. V7J 2P2
[604] 988-2066

[Relive the FIFA World Cup goals with exclusive video highlights!](http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com/fc/en)

<http://fifaworldcup.yahoo.com/fc/en>