

**Subject: FW: joint meeting rec comm.**

**Date:** Tue, 14 Oct 2003 14:54:14 -0700

**From:** "Ernie Crist" <ernie\_crist@dnv.org>

**To:** "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>, <cagebc@yahoo.com>

> FW: joint meeting rec comm.

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> A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST:

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> Bwlow is the letter I sent to Mr. Fleming, Chair of the North Vancouver Recreation  
Commisison in response to a recently held joint meeting of the Recreation  
> Commission and the Councils' of the City and the District. It is the letter which Ms  
Agnes Hilsen the District Clerk refused to send out on a District letterhead claiming  
that it violated Council policy. What Ms Hilsen was in effect stating is that the Chair  
of the Rec Commission may interrupt an elected representative of the public while  
speaking, deny evidence presented or ask pertinent questions, but the same elected  
representative may not respond in kind, set the record straight or protest against such  
unbusinesslike conduct. It is yet another blatant example that the District is nothing  
but a banana republic where bureaucrats interpret policies at their whim just as they  
do in the erstwhile banana republics themselves

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> Dear Mr. Fleming:

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> I must protest in the strongest possible terms against your conduct during the recent  
joint meeting of Councils and the Rec Commission. To put it bluntly, your chairmanship  
leaves very much to be desired.

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> HOWEVER, SINCE THE INCIDENT TOOK PLACE IN THE PRESENCE OF BOTH MEMBERS OF COUNCILS AND  
STAFF, I WILL SEND A COPY OF THIS LETTER LIKEWISE TO ALL CONCERNED.

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> To begin with, you may not be aware but, as an elected official, I have the right to  
speak and make statements. Your interruptions and comments were anything but  
professional or helpful. My comments were neither malicious nor were they inaccurate.  
My comments were, in fact, geared to open your eyes which you apparently resent.

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> Secondly, your remarks that you have heard comments attributed to me about the  
RecCommission from other sources is equally immaterial. I particularly resent your  
inference that my comments were anti staff and that YOU, who are not elected by the  
public, are to tell me what I may say or not say. Such comments are not only cheap but  
they are also patently false. To put it bluntly, Mr. Fleming, what you hear from third  
sources is of no interest or relevance. I will continue to criticize any and all  
shortcomings based on my own observations regardless.

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> My philosophy has always been clearly enunciated and demonstrated over the last 24  
years in which I have been elected and even before. During my more than 6 years on the  
Commission I initiated numerous programs, improvements and expansions which still stand  
today. The dollar day, the hot tubs, the steam rooms, several facility additions were  
all a result of my hard work and my initiatives, not to speak of the Wave Pool at the  
K.M. Facility which was hotly opposed by the then Mayor of the District. I had to fight  
hard on Council to get the funds for them. But, during those 6 years plus, I could also  
see firsthand and was appalled at the inefficiency and the wastefulness of the  
Commission. A modest addition to one of our facilities, which I had independently  
estimated at between \$115,000 and \$125,000, cost the taxpayers \$503,000. A steam room,  
estimated at \$25,000 cost us \$85,000 the first time and, after the Commission used that  
money for a different purpose and for which those responsible should have been fired,  
cost us \$45,000 the second time.

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> Anybody with any kind of business training will see that, when it comes to running the  
Commission like a business, not a business to make profit but to provide services in a  
businesslike fashion, the Commission is failing badly.

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> I strongly believe in public recreation as an integral part of the preventive health care system and as an extremely important community service. I have done more than my fair share to promote both facility expansion as well as the effectiveness of the administration and this is where the crux seems to lie and where your sensitivity seem to stem from. I have come to the conclusion that, in order to save public recreation, its administration must be fundamentally reformed> . All bureaucracies carry the seeds of their own destruction within them. They become self serving, over-bureaucratized and ineffective. A glance at the Commission from virtually every angle tells the story.

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> Indeed, I believe that the Rec Commission must be disbanded, regardless of the good and hard work by many of the staff. A motion to that effect is on the table and will come before Council shortly. It may well be defeated but, notwithstanding, the handwriting is on the wall. There is a subjective reality and there is an objective reality and sooner or later the objective factors will come to the fore. Unless what I propose is carried out, the days of public recreation, as we know it, are numbered. My purpose is to save it, albeit that politicians may deride my efforts.

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> Your comments that it is OK to close the facilities to the regular users during regular hours for the benefit of private clubs because they may consist of local residents tells the story. If you were to turn the issue around you would very quickly realize just how absurd this position is.

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> No-one has ever suggested closing the facilities to private or non profit clubs. They may well be accommodated when convenient and within reason. But this is not what you are doing. You are accommodating them on an increasing scale at the expense of the public. You are, in fact, closing the facilities to the general public altogether. You have no compunction in closing the facilities to the housewife, the worker, the businessman and the senior during regular hours who, as part of their routine, want to use the facilities they are paying for. I also take note that you are less than enthusiastic about reforming the Commission along the Parkgate model which is a far more efficient model and gives neighborhoods a greater say in the running of their facilities.

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> As far as programs go, the Commission has departed far from the concept of programs geared for the maximum health benefit of the maximum number of people at minimum cost. It is now, maximum programs geared for the minimum number of people at maximum cost and at the expense of the public since this apparently shows up as income. You seem to forget that the near \$6 million subsidy given to the Commission by the District alone exists only by the grace of the public.

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> I also take exception to the fact that you have already accommodated the schools at the expense of the general public without making sure that the School Board is living up to its part of the bargain. Your argument that this is in a process stage is specious indeed. As Councillor Perreault aptly stated " an agreement is an agreement " .

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> And finally, I resent the charts we were shown. They are patently misleading and, in some cases, patently false. The performance indicators and benchmark charts are, quite frankly, unconvincing to anybody who understands such matters, including the cost per visit chart, by way of example. As an elected official responsible to the public, I expect the truth not propoganda and facts not fiction. You may wish to check this out. I would be more than happy to assist you. To give you but one example, you listed the adult swim/skate fee at \$4.65 when, in fact, it is \$5.35 with further increases over and above the cost of living index scheduled.

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> Also, as I pointed out, your program evaluation and customer satisfaction is misleading. It is too bad that when I suggested an improvement, you interrupted and sidetracked the issue.

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> All in all, I must ask you to refrain from a repetition of your poor performance as chair at that meeting. Criticisms will continue whether you like it or not. Indeed, given the financial crisis state of the Commission, you should welcome a full fledged discussion and review that is if you really believe in the concept of public recreation. Even a blind man can see that, > unless fundamental changes are made soon, within a short period the concept of public recreation as we know it will be a thing of the past. We have to face facts.

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> *Ernie Crist*

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