

Subject:

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A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST

I recently put forward a motion suggessting that District staff reports pertaining to DVP applications contain a small paragraph stating that the application has been forwarded to the relevant community association for perusal and comment. COMMENTS TO THAT EFFECT ARE IN THE REPORTS NOW BUT IT SHOULD BE DONE IN THE FORM OF A DISTINCT PARAGRAPH, I THOUGHT.


I have pushed for this idea for a long time believing, as I do, that it would enhance the prestige of the relevant community associations and also make them aware of such applications, in a timely fashion. I also believe that information meetings on rezoning applications, presently chaired by the developers, should be chaired by the relevant community associations.

It is my conviction that the associations have to raise their profile and move forward if they are to maintain their relevance and value to the community. The current DVP process is undermining the neighborhood planning process. What the pro developer elements in the community cannot achieve directly, they are achieving piecemeal. At present, virtually all such applications are accepted by Council. Staff reports invariably recommend approval.

In one instance, it states that the impact is minimal because the variance is hidden by trees in the back and in another because it is hidden by trees in the front. These are all excuses, of course. The variances, in their totality, are turning District neighborhoods into a free for all and a dogs breakfast. The speculators love it. Such applications should be approved only if it is a genuine hardship. In such a case, they should be handled by the Board of Variance. It would also save the District a considerable amount of money since the present process is very costly and time consuming. Indeed the District Planning Department has built a whole industry around the DVP application process.

If a neighborhood feels that the reasons which have led to neighborhood planning guidelines are no longer relevant than they should be changed as a result of due process. The present method makes a mockery of the neighborhood planning process. It also undermines the credibility of the existing community associations who have fought hard for such guidelines in the first place.

However, why should the public join a neighborhood organization and take it seriously when it has no clout. Why go through a neighborhood organization when Council will agree to any variance application, in any case. However, when I recently made a modest proposal that a paragraph to that effect be inserted in the staff reports Council turned my motion down. Council would not have done so had the motion been supported by the associations. Also when I made a motion some time ago that rezoning applications be chaired by the relevant community associations rather than by the developers, it fell on deaf ears. As in anything else in life if you don't move forward you are effectively moving backward. The North Vancouver District Community Associations are no exception.

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