

Subject: Re: Ward-No ward

Date: Tue, 19 Oct 2004 18:40:03 +0100 (BST)

From: Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

CC: Ernie Crist <ernie_crist@dnv.org>, "FONVCA \ (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>, Mayor and Council - DNV <Council@dnv.org>, Senior Management Committee <managecomm@dnv.org>, poetic_licence@hotmail.com, vimcallister@hotmail.com, m.bragg@shaw.ca, Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>

Hi, Corrie:

I'm afraid you and I part company on this issue. I believe I have a right to be represented by a full - ethical and competent - Council. Given that we can achieve the 'ethical and competent' component, then I would expect all members of council to listen courteously to the opinions of all citizens, discuss the issues in a fair and open manner and make their decisions. In such a system, I would then expect that I would win some, lose some and compromise on some. What could be more democratic?

The reason our current system has not worked too well, is that many [thankfully not all] members of many councils come to the table with preconceived positions - left-wing/right-wing for example - and/or for ulterior motives.....increased development being but one.

I guess it will take longer than I have left in my lifetime but I believe we have to start again at the beginning i.e. raising young people who can respect the rules - and one another - and who don't, then, need a piece of paper to explain right from wrong.

As an example, you will remember that a council candidate attended the last meeting of FONVCA. When the agenda reached the point at which FONVCA's questions to candidates were to be discussed, that person stood up, thanked the assembly for their time, and excused himself from the meeting. By his action, he demonstrated that he understood, without being told, that it would be unfair for him to have advance knowledge of the questions, or of FONVCA's intent behind the questions. In an 'at large' system, therefore, I would have little worry that such a person would not pay sincere attention to my opinions.....all we need are six more like him.

If you flip the coin, Corrie, and place that individual as a 1-voice ward rep, I believe he would stand little chance against some of the other wily votes we have seen in the not-too-distant past. Instead, he would need to 'trade' support for his motion with others who might well have a less altruistic outlook.

I agree that I have been looking on the dark side; it's a case of preparing against the worst that could happen in a ward system, and hoping for the best out of an at-large system.....better the devil you know.....

In a short note I received from Mr. Ridge, he indicates that he has some knowledge of ward systems elsewhere. It might be worth making this issue the subject of a workshop, or of an upcoming meeting of FONVCA.

Cheers,
Liz

Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca> wrote:

Hi Liz,

I have heard all those arguments before. Do you think it is right for somebody to be able to talk and convince a majority of council to vote one way on an issue which impacts another neighbourhood? Also, when you vote for your ward "boss" (I dislike that biased word - reminds me of Capone / gangster era) you certainly don't expect him/her to obey your every wish. He/she is expected to abide by the wishes of the majority in your community.

Try and think along the lines of influence, democracy, representation etc and you will find that the ward system is a fairer one. Forget about the minority groups - just think of them as people who have opinions and desires like we all do. Everyone has a better/fairer voice in a ward system.

This discussion is so hard to do by email and really should be done at a workshop.

Note that since nobody seems to have come forward why the provincial/federal government elections should be done at large, I rest my case. If it's good for the goose it should

be good for the gander. To say it another way - if ward systems are not good for local governments, they should not be good for the current Provincial "wards" system either.

Corrie

Elizabeth James wrote:

Hi, Corrie:

Given our current politicians, I oppose a ward system for local government. I agree with those who say that, if your ward politician - e.g. a Don Bell or Janice Harris - does not like you or agree with your idea, you're sunk. Also, if your ward rep was a Bell, or a Sharp or a McCallum, again you're sunk.

At least one would have a chance that one of the seven would assist in carrying the point forward.

That said, a weekend letter to the editor put forward another third alternative. He suggested a system which would allow for, say, seven wards in Vancouver, each with a rep, and seven additional at large members of Council. That way a voter would have two votes - one ward and one at large candidate.

That I liked.

Regards,
Liz

Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca> wrote:

I think a Ward system for big cities is a no brainer. Those opposed should examine why we do not elect provincial or federal representatives at large. Democracy requires it. Almost all big cities have it. So far all arguments I read that oppose a ward system have not yet convinced me to change my opinion. The debate is far from over. That said, I am not proposing a ward system for a population the size of DNV.

Corrie Kost

Ernie Crist wrote:

>A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST.

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>The recent controversy in Vancouver around the Ward system may be of interest also to the District of North Vancouver including the Federation of North Vancouver Community Associations FONVCA. The District is large and has distinct sections and like any municipality has special interest groups.

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>I do not agree that the Ward system for Vancouver is a progressive idea. I used to believe that, but not anymore. I believe that it is an idea whose time is past. I was part of the debate before I moved to the North Shore from Vancouver and when COPE was still a fledgling civic party. I was closely associated with Harry Rankin, Bruce York, Dusty Greenwell and other prominent COPE members at the time. I not only shared a common interest on civic issues with these people but in other areas as well. Most of these same people were also prominent in the fight against the Vietnam war as were many North Shore residents and churches including the Unitarians.

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>In Vancouver, COPE argued for a Ward system. Vancouver's Municipal Hall was dominated by the pro developer NPA much like the District in recent years was dominated by the Concerned Citizens Association (CCA). The CCA was a civic party representing a special interest group specifically formed to prevent the general public from accessing public owned waterfront in Deep Cove.

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>During the municipal election, the CCA, among others, endorsed and re elected Lisa Muri, Don Bell and Janice Harris. The CCA spent a great deal of money to defeat the sitting Councillors including

Ernie Crist, Glynis Deering Robb, Pat Munroe and Trevor Carolan. The District had established a citizens Task Force to establish a long term policy for the use of the waterfront. It was made up of a citizens volunteer group. It recommended that over a period of 50 years a public walkway should be built along the foreshore. It also recommended that illegal structures on public land be removed.

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>As for the Vancouver Ward controversy - areas such as East Vancouver, it was argued at the time, would have better representation and more clout than in a system which was controlled by Vancouver's West End and the "rich" of Kerrisdale who controlled the NPA. You might say the NPA was partial in looking after certain areas while Vancouver East was neglected. Kerrisdale got the sidewalks and the playing fields while Vancouver East did not. In such circumstances a Ward system, where all areas would have equal representation was indeed progressive.

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>However, in my opinion the situation has changed. COPE is now in power and represents the interest of all residents in Vancouver. Giving the neglected areas a voice is now a fact. But I do not believe it has sunk in, including by some members of COPE themselves who are still arguing for a Ward system.

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>For the time being, the Ward idea in Vancouver is dead but it may well be resurrected again. The best guarantee that all of Vancouver is represented in the Municipal Hall equally is to become politically active. The same is true for the people in the District of North Vancouver. If District residents want to walk on land which belongs to them, they will have to stand up and be counted just as their erstwhile elected Councillors Pat Munroe, Trevor Carolan and Glynis Deering Robb did when this issue was on the agenda. If necessary people will have to form their own civic party rather than allowing the CCA or any one of its changed name successors to once again mislead them.

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>Ernie Crist

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