

**Subject: RE: District Hall "art"- a horror show**

**Date:** Sat, 9 Apr 2005 11:44:47 -0700

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

**To:** <cathyadams@canada.com>, "James Ridge" <James\_Ridge@dnv.org>, <fonvca@fonvca.org>, <Cagebc@yahoo.com>, <Bostwickm@dnv.org>, "Robyn Newton" <Robyn\_Newton@dnv.org>

**CC:** "Dennis Back" <dback@dnv.org>, "John McPherson" <John\_McPherson@dnv.org>, "Mayor Harris" <Janice\_Harris@dnv.org>, "Sherwood Johnson" <Sherwood\_Johnson@dnv.org>, "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@dnv.org>, <Council@cnv.org>, <nvartscouncil@telus.net>

A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST

There appears to be some misunderstanding about the role of the District CAO in regards to this issue. Mrs Adams a District resident in particular, expects the CAO to respond to her demands for removal of paintings from the Municipal Hall depicting partial nudity. Council, however, has mandated the Arts Council to determine criteria for displaying art objects in the Municipal Hall - this includes paintings.

Needless to say, since the Hall is a public place, any individual, including Mrs Adams a District resident has the right to voice his/her concerns to any member of Council, the Manager and/or the Arts Council itself. However, for an individual to voice concerns is one thing, to demand from the Manager unilateral action for removal, especially in the absence of any particular criteria, is quite another. To establish criteria of sorts, however difficult, since we are talking about art, is precisely the purpose of my upcoming motion.

We must keep in mind that artists use art as a tool to convey a message much as cartoonists use cartoons to convey social critique. To deny such a medium is to deny freedom of expression itself.

The point is, did the artist on canvass portray nudity and firearms to promote gratuitous exploitation of female sexuality and violence or did he do so to expose a social blight? Unless those who have criticized the paintings can answer this question, removal of the paintings is, in my opinion unjustified, if not dangerous, especially without providing the Arts Council with an opportunity to respond.

It would be the same as condemning the anti war movies "All Quiet On The Western Front" or "Full Metal Jacket" for promoting violence. What we do know is that leading psychologists and internationally recognised authorities of the calibre of Noam Chomsky are on record against the serious dangers of gratuitous violence on TV made possible through corporate sponsorship.

We also know that when Councillor Crist in the form of motions suggested action through the UBCM and the FCM, there was not a single voice in support from this community, not from any individual on or off District Council, District Staff, CUPE, nor any of the churches nor from the "Together Against Violence" persons nor for that matter from any of the Community Associations.

My motion requesting to set up a committee to establish guidelines will or should at least come up this coming Monday.

Ernie Crist

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

From: cathyadams@canada.com [<mailto:cathyadams@canada.com>]

Sent: Friday, April 08, 2005 10:40 AM

To: James Ridge  
Cc: Dennis Back; John McPherson; Mayor Harris; Sherwood Johnson; Mayor and Council - DNV  
Subject: RE: District Hall "art"- a horror show

Dear Mr. Ridge  
Thank you for your response.

However, it is clear that everyone only wants to deal with this issue as a "women's issue". No one has ever addressed MY concern - that these materials are not appropriate for all members of our community, and should not be forced upon residents.

It's interesting to note that while Mr. McPherson, in your absence, took the time to gather a group of women to advise him, he did not invite me, nor any of the people who have sent in written complaints, nor did he respond to either of my two e-mails directly to him, as Acting CAO. In one, I requested a meeting.

Several people, including Pat Heal, have provided written complaints. She also expressed the concern that the paintings are not suitable in this public venue, where it is known that children do come into. The artist himself is quoted as saying this may not be an appropriate location for the works.

Thursday, in my capacity as the volunteer chair of a District committee, I was in a meeting at the hall. Immediately after, while on my way to pick up my youngest child from school, I realized that while I was at the hall, I had forgotten to deliver some rather urgent documentation that had been requested by a staff member. I thought I would pick up my son, go right back to the hall with him, and drop off the materials. Then of course I realized, I could not, because I can not take him into District hall right now. James - I think it is reasonable that I should expect to take my children into District Hall, on those occasions when it is necessary for me to do so, as it was in this case.

Please respond to my concern, as stated previously, on the issue of my right, as a volunteer, to have the expectation of an appropriate and respectful workplace environment at District Hall.

I would appreciate direct answers to these questions:

- 1) Does the District management recognize that children come into District Hall, usually on a daily basis?
- 2) If so, is it recognized that the hall must be a safe place, in all respects, for those children?
- 3) Is it unlikely that the current display of materials would be permitted in a venue where more members of the public attend each day?
- 4) Is it likely that the current materials on display would be detrimental to the emotional and psychological wellbeing of some children?
- 5) Are the paintings on display right now appropriate for viewing for all age groups?

These are the types of issues that should be getting discussed.

As for getting "expert" advice - pay attention to Ms. Heal's comments, as former chair of the Together Against Violence Network. She also has years of experience as school board trustee and chair.

The type of expert advice you should have sought, perhaps in addition to the women's centre, is from professionals such as a child psychologist,

and perhaps someone who is tuned into a wide range of different community members' sensibilities - I can think of a pastor being suitable, for instance. Doctors, psychologists and pastors deal with people every day who could be disturbed by the images on display.

As for a resident's complaint about the nativity scene, while I recognize that some people would have a concern about that and the menorah on display each December, that is a far different situation. Both of these items are seen throughout the community, in the media, etc. These are not unusual portrayals to run across, and could not be viewed as detrimental to a child's psychological wellbeing. Now - if there was a graphic portrayal of Christ on the cross displayed at Easter, that would be a different story.

As a parent, I do not expect to have to run into the types of display currently at the hall, nor do I.

I do not intend to speak to Coun. Crist's motion. He does not deal with my issue of concern, only the so-called "violence against women" aspect. Also - my request was not to council, but to District management. It is your responsibility to deal with this, and that should have been done right away. You had the authority to ask that they be removed, then have whatever debate was necessary, but chose not to handle it that way. No harm would have been done - the paintings can always be rehung later.

That this is still not resolved and the paintings are due to be removed in a few days anyway does not speak well of the District.

Cathy Adams

On Thu, 7 Apr 2005 10:33:48 -0700, "James Ridge" wrote:

>  
> Ms Adams,  
>  
> Certainly we are aware of your complaint and are considering  
> how it  
> falls under our various policies. A formal complaint is required and  
> Mr.  
> Johnson will guide you to the process. I do want to stress that it is  
  
> not the case that the simple receipt of a complaint compels us to  
> remove, without any consideration of the issue, the offending item's).  
> An investigation is undertaken after a complaint is made  
and  
> a  
> determination of the appropriate action is made. In my experience, in  
> most cases there is little debate about whether an item is inherently  
> offensive. In this case there was considerable disagreement on the  
> extent to which the art was inherently offensive.  
>  
> Even when a complaint is made, in some occasions we choose not to act  
> on a complaint. For instance, I received several complaints last year  
> about the nativity scene on the roof to the District hall over  
> December, including an extensive, written, and extremely articulate  
> complaint from a person who was deeply offended by the religious  
> display for a variety of legitimate personal reasons. After  
> consideration, however, we chose not to remove the nativity scene or  
> the menorah.  
>  
> In response to your complaint, your concerns (and my own  
> concerns) about  
> the art show were communicated in my absence to the Arts Council. The  
> Council chose to remove some of the paintings, and took the entirety

> reasonable and responsible step of inviting representatives of women's  
> organizations to review the paintings and provide advice.  
> Similarly Mr.  
> McPherson convened a group of women to review the art and provide him  
> with advice. As you know others in the community and on council had  
> their own concerns, also legitimate, about the issue of censorship and  
> communicated those concerns to the Arts Council who had to deal with  
> both sets of legitimate, but conflicting, opinions.  
>  
> The issue may be debated further in the future in regards  
to  
> Councillor  
> Crist's notice of motion.  
>  
> Finally, the reason you did not receive an out of office notification  
> from my e-mail account during my vacation is that my  
mailbox  
> quickly  
> overloaded, at which point the system refuses to sent out more mail,  
> including vacation notices.  
>  
> James Ridge  
> CAO  
>  
> -----Original Message-----  
> From: cathyadams@canada.com [<mailto:cathyadams@canada.com>]  
> Sent: Thursday, March 31, 2005 11:48 PM  
> To: James Ridge  
> Cc: Dennis Back  
> Subject: Fwd: District Hall "art"- a horror show  
>  
> James -  
> Do I need to somehow "formalize" my complaint, to get even  
a  
> response to  
> my previous four emails, including another one sent to you this week?  
>  
> The only response I ever received was an immediate one from yourself,  
> right after this original one, in which you indicated you would be  
> having the arts council remove the paintings.  
>  
> As I said in the email below, I did not want to see this turn into a  
> political football, which it has, with articles now in the Province,  
> Georgia Straight (can you believe it?), the Outlook, and  
the  
> North Shore  
> News soon, I hear.  
> Contrary to Coun. Crist's statement that I "hit the ceiling", I feel  
> my original email - directed to yourself as the CAO, and not  
to  
> council -  
> was a reasonable request.  
>  
> I also find it interesting that no one, in any quote I have seen, has  
> spoken to the issue of these paintings being inappropriate for all  
> audiences. That remains my primary concern. At this  
point,  
> I can not  
> have my children accompany me into the hall, as I sometimes do.  
>  
> As CAO, I again request that you review the Corporate  
Policy  
> Manual, on

> which I sent my research previously, and restore District Hall to  
> being a "positive workplace environment"  
> for myself and others.  
>  
> Cathy Adams  
>  
>  
> ----- Start of forwarded message -----  
>  
> Subject: District Hall "art"- a horror show  
> From: cathyadams@canada.com  
> Date: Fri, 18 Mar 2005 10:51:54 -0800 (PST)  
> To: James\_Ridge@dnv.org  
> Cc: managecomm@dnv.org, Council@dnv.org, fonvca@fonvca.org  
>  
> Dear Mr. Ridge  
>  
> While attending a meeting at District Hall last evening, I was  
> extremely upset to be subjected to the offensive "art display" in the  
> front foyer area of the building. As I needed to use the washroom, I  
> had no choice about it.  
>  
> Who made the decision that this type of material -  
depicting  
> multiple  
> images of guns, most superimposed on female forms, most of which are  
> garbed in underwear or appear to be naked -is appropriate  
in  
> as public a  
> setting as District Hall?  
>  
> Several women, including myself, all strongly felt the images depict,  
> and perhaps celebrate, violence against women. Done in a somewhat  
> erotic fashion.  
>  
> This type of material is not appropriate in a place where people are  
> subjected to it, without warning, and without  
> their consent. District Hall is just such a place.  
People  
> will come across it on their way into the mayor's office, into council  
> meetings (where it can be viewed from inside those meetings), into the  
> clerk's office, and even on their way to the bathroom.  
>  
> And as a parent, I have strong feelings about perhaps "running into  
> it"  
> with my nine year old son. I do bring him into the hall from time to  
> time. In fact, he has been there twice in the last few weeks. I  
> should not have to be concerned about going ahead of him, to see  
if  
> offensive  
> materials such as this current display are in view. Surely District  
> Hall should be a "safe place" for all our residents.  
>  
> I want to add that it also offends me, as a Christian, that this  
> material is to be on display at District Hall over the Good Friday and  
> Easter period. It seems to fly in the face of the lovely and  
> meaningful nativity scene on display at Christmas!  
>  
> I would like a fast response from whoever at the hall  
should  
> deal with  
> this. I would like to see these images removed

immediately.

> *If it*  
> *takes weeks, and a "political" decision, I'll be very unhappy.*  
>  
> *I hope I'm not the only person who has taken the time to complain*  
> *about this. I look forward to a reply.*  
>  
> *And thank you for your attention to this.*  
> *Cathy Adams*  
>  
> ----- End of forwarded message -----



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