

COUNCIL NEEDS PUBLIC OVERSIGHT

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Dear Editor:

Penticton city council, embraced in an apparent love-in with city hall senior management, is constantly scheming for ways to convert public assets, public services, public lands like parks and, mostly, public money (as in your tax dollars and mine) into grandiose developments that feed private interests.

And make no mistake, that's what the SS Sicamous plan is – a developer's plan, not a citizens' plan.

Aside from the fact one wonders whether we're paying these bureaucrats too much money, and they apparently have too much time on their hands, how is it, and why is it, they keep coming up with ways to shower public money on consultants and environmentally and socially destructive programs?

One thing bureaucrats and politicians like city councils hate is linkage. Solid citizen thinking and reasoning is often based on linkage, and that's legitimate.

The reality is, everything is linked.

Like how is it that city hall finds a way to consider dumping between \$1.1 million and \$6 million on the Sicamous Plan, but they can't find a way to mail bills to taxpayers without dinging them \$1 (especially since we've already paid for it with our taxes)?

That's what linkage is. They hate it.

Maybe next time in their searching for "budget savings," we can look at senior city hall management pay scales, or downsize the number of positions. And what an opportune time; how about eliminating the vacant city manager position?

Replace it with a council of existing department heads. There's a savings sufficient to pay for mailing bills, and at no loss to taxpayers.

Any reasonable person that looks at the proposed Sicamous master plan can see it's based on concrete and asphalt. More concrete and more asphalt – just what we need on the lakeshore and in our parks.

If the public leaves these city schemers to their own hobnobbing with developers, consultants and lobbyists, they will systematically destroy our waterfront and our parks, and deplete our tax funded services by shuffling tax dollars into these developer goodies.

The mentality at city hall seems to be “build more, use tax subsidies, make more money for ‘friends’ in the private sector.”

I have no confidence in this council and its lack of vision, and even less confidence and trust in senior city staff. They're the ones that sit behind closed doors and dream up these public land and tax dollar grabs.

Council resembles the proverbial sad sack donkey on the end of the rope, being jerked this way and that by city managers and the private sector alliance.

First, they take a run at Skaha beach parkland, they snidely want to improve the marina on Skaha, and now they're poking at the green space and park at the Sicamous, or they want to put machines, as in BMX bikes, and dust ruts on natural habitat on Munson Mountain. This predictable failure to serve the best long-term interests of Penticton citizens stems from the lack of public oversight; they've got money (they treat it as theirs, but it's ours) to double the size of a department hustling subsidized business relocation, but they can't seem to find the resources (or the backbone) to establish a full-time public citizens advisory board.

If they, and we the citizens of Penticton, want a decent plan for the Sicamous Park, a citizens park and a citizens' plan, then this recent scheme should be thrown into the basement, and the door opened to public proposals and full-scale public consultation (a hell of a lot more than standing on the street corner quizzing a hand full of passersby) and hearings (the present in-council limit of three minutes makes this practice an insult).

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