

Subject: [Fwd: FW: Council Committee Costs]

Date: Mon, 10 Jun 2002 17:37:44 -0700

From: Brian Platts <brian_platts@telus.net>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

Subject: RE: FW: Council Committee Costs

Date: Mon, 10 Jun 2002 12:49:49 -0700

From: Ernie Crist <ernie_crist@dnv.org>

To: "Elizabeth James" <cagebc@yahoo.com>, Ernie Crist <ernie_crist@dnv.org>, "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

Dear Ms James:

I am as surprised as you are about this revelation but this is what Mr. Smythe has said in his e-mail. In previous discussions this was never revealed. Indeed if my memory serves me correctly it was always stated that staff time was included in the total cost of Committees.

At this moment I am sceptical of everything. As the saying goes burnt a hundred times a thousand times shy. Who but the present Council would blame me.

Ernie Crist.

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

From: Elizabeth James [mailto:cagebc@yahoo.com]

Sent: Monday, June 10, 2002 11:59 AM

To: Ernie Crist; FONVCA (E-mail)

Subject: Re: FW: Council Committee Costs

Dear Councillor Criist:

Since this committee expense figure appears to be so complicated to calculate, does this imply that each committee does not have a separate ledger page in the District books? Or is it that an amount for staff FTE time is not included in costs?

Either way, I would have expected the District to be able to zero in on *any* of its distinct activities, so that cost:benefits could be under an ongoing microscope to make sure each activity was worthwhile for district taxpayers.

In the same way that Parks and Engineering costs for the +/- \$14 million landfill 'closure' activities could not, without a good deal of expensive work, be broken down in fine enough detail so as to enable an answer to my request to isolate out those amounts not directly and specifically related to 'closure', so, it appears, requests for specific detail on committee costs cannot be provided in total. Which leads one to wonder how many other items contained within the "General Ledgers" could stand closer examination or, at the very least, an accounting protocol in much finer detail.

As an example, it would not mean much for me to account for household costs by saying: I spend \$1,200/month on mortgage, food, transport and entertainment if, when short of money, I am unable to elicit from that figure that I'm spending \$400 on entertainment and only \$100 on food!

Although I'm prepared to be shown the error of my ways, the casual attitude to accounting for the spending of taxpayer dollars - at *all* levels of government - blows my mind.

At the District level, perhaps it is time to spend a little money on an external review of the District's accounting protocols - NOT, please be assured, that I suggest there is anything "going on" but, rather, that it appears we could benefit from purchase of a more precise accounting system.

Sincerely,

Liz James, Chair

Coalition for Accountability in Government Enterprises

B0x 16090, 3017 Mountain Highway,

NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C. V7J 2P2

[604] 988-2066

Ernie Crist <ernie_crist@dnv.org> wrote:

A Message from Ernie Crist:

You may recall that I sent you an e-mail re this issue. I told you that I was going to get an update figure from Finance for 2001. This is the answer I got from Terry Smythe in response to my request.

Have Fun.

Ernie

> -----Original Message-----

> From: Terry Smythe

> Sent: Monday, June 10, 2002 10:28 AM

> To: Ernie Crist

> Cc: John McPherson

> Subject: Council Committee Costs

>

> Councillor Crist:

>

> I am unable to provide you with the information you requested re 2001

> Actual costs for all Council Committees.

>

> Our accounts capture direct non-salary costs charged against various

> committees, but do not capture staff salaries other than for committee

> clerks provided by the Clerk's department. This means that fairly

> substantial staff salary costs are coded to "Salaries", but not to

> individual committees.

>

> A report that analyzed the full costs was prepared in 1999, and totalled

> \$183,312, but that report included \$48,600 for the Waterfront Task Force

> which no longer operates. Since then, a Community Monitoring Advisory

> Committee has been added. An update to that report could entail

> considerable staff time and would have to be based, at least in part, on

> time allocation estimates.

>

> Terry Smythe

> ATTACHMENT part 2 application/ms-tnef

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