

Subject: Waterfront Disgrace

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North Vancouver District Council should be thoroughly ashamed of itself. At the January 21st Council meeting, one of the items on the agenda was a modest staff recommendation for opening three road ends leading to the Deep Cove waterfront.

In other municipalities, opening publicly-owned road ends to increase opportunities for public access to the waterfront is a no-brainer. Not with this Council. During the last election, of course, a group of mostly waterfront homeowners calling themselves the "Concerned Citizen's Association" spent thousands to promote a slate of candidates who were all hostile to increased waterfront access. Only Councillor Crist was not endorsed by this shadowy group.

On the issue of road ends, Council previously delayed making a decision and instructed staff to write a report detailing costs, and to make a recommendation on which road ends should be the highest priority to open first. The resulting discussion of this report was typical of what we've come to expect from a Council that cares little for the broader public interest.

In summary the cost of opening three of these long-overdue waterfront access points was to be \$85,000, with \$40,000 of this already approved in the 2001 budget. Going back to last year, Council delayed making a decision on what street ends to open. Not wanting to be seen as having rejected the initiative outright, they instructed staff to write a report detailing the cost of opening each remaining road end, and to make a recommendation on which ones should receive the highest priority to open first.

The final report recommended three road ends be opened immediately, two of which are located on precious Panorama Drive. Of particular significance, one of the specified road ends sits adjacent to 2882

Panorama Dr. -- which just happens to be the same address where the owner illegally constructed a huge monster house, and when caught, was rewarded for his actions with a huge variance permit from Council.

Anyway, the owner of 2882 Panorama Dr. was sitting in the gallery with Peter Dunsford and other backers of the so-called "Concerned Citizen's Association". During public input, a representative the Panorama Dr. Ratepayer's Association commented (with a straight face) that they are deeply concerned about the cost of opening these waterfront access points and that Council should first make the existing open road ends safe. Interesting how this ratepayer's group is only concerned about costs when it involves increasing public access to the waterfront! If District expenditures are so high on the waterfront homeowners' list of priorities, one wonders where they were during the District's annual budget meetings.

During the subsequent debate, councillors Bill Denault, Doug Mackay-Dunn, Janice Harris, Heather Dunsford, together with Mayor Bell all saluted their waterfront masters on cue and parroted the arguments of the Panorama Dr. Ratepayer's letter sent to Council the previous day (January 20th). When Denault took up the safety issue regarding the condition of those few road ends currently open to the public, the parks manager replied that they already have a maintenance budget which is completely separate from the money allocated for additional openings. Mackay-Dunn then puffed himself up and demanded these dangerous steps and steep trails be repaired forthwith!!! Strange how these two councillors are suddenly so concerned about the public safety at these road end locations. Just where have they been the past two years?

Councillor Harris commented that she thought District residents had enough waterfront access already. She went on to warn ominously that it was going to be a very tight '02 budget and that ultimately there might not be enough money for new openings. What she overlooked, however, is half the money had ALREADY been approved in the 2001 budget. The only thing left to decide was WHICH road ends should be prioritized to open now.

For her part, Councillor Dunsford (a Panorama Drive waterfront homeowner) did her best to find a red-herring by asking that a full

traffic study of Panorama Dr. be conducted. With the exception of Councillor Crist, they all tried desperately to invent ANY flimsy excuse to delay or cancel opening road ends on Panorama Drive.

It must be further noted that although five road ends exist on Panorama Drive, not one has been opened for public access. Councillor Denault lamely commented that he would not want to see the illegally-constructed concrete wall blocking access to the road end next to 2882 Panorama deconstructed as it serves as a necessary turn-a-round for firetrucks. Of course Denault is fully aware that complete removal of the wall is not necessary. All that's required is an opening through which the public can access a spectacular viewpoint.

As for Councillor Lisa Muri, it did not go unnoticed that she was absent. Wasn't this the same councillor who was also absent during the meeting at which the waterfront homeowners on Stonehaven were given sewer connections worth almost \$200,000? One hopes this councillor, who has friends living on the waterfront, wasn't simply avoiding making a difficult decision. (I give her credit, however, for voting against the monstrous building variance at 2882 Panorama Drive two years ago.)

In the end, Council did what it does best and passed a motion asking staff for yet ANOTHER report on costs and priorities (exactly what staff had already done!). When the vote was concluded, Peter Dunsford and the rest of the CCA gang filed out to shake hands in the hallway. And who says that Council doesn't listen to community groups? Money and self-interest obviously speaks loud and clear.

Brian Platts