

Subject: [Fwd: Mountain-biking and Council]

Date: Fri, 11 Feb 2005 17:06:48 -0800

From: Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>

To: Corrie Kost <kost@triumf.ca>

Subject: Mountain-biking and Council

Date: Sat, 12 Feb 2005 00:52:29 +0000 (GMT)

From: Elizabeth James <cagebc@yahoo.com>

To: Mayor Harris and Council <council@dnv.org>, "James Ridge, CAO" <james_ridge@dnv.org>

CC: fonvca@fonvca.org

11 February 2005

Dear Mayor Harris:

A considerable amount of misunderstanding appears to be circulating among mountain-bikers, as to the position of Council with respect to our local mountains.

From reading copies of emails which have been aimed - I use the word advisedly - at Council and, in particular, at Clr. Crist, it seems that cyclists have been told that Clr. Crist wishes to ban mountain-biking from all North Shore mountains, especially Mt. Fromme. I am concerned that no official letter from the Mayor's office has been sent to the NSMBA to clarify the matter.

As you are aware, it was approximately one and a half years ago that a residents' delegation appeared before Council to express their strong concerns about trespass and vandalism of private property by mountain bikers, and about the parking problems in their neighbourhood. If memory serves me correctly, Council's initial reaction was to exert parking restrictions, which had the predictable result - vehicles moved down a block or two and caused more problems.

It was then that Clr. Crist made what I consider to have been a sensible motion. He proposed that a moratorium be imposed on mountain-biking in the District. The intent was to allow Council time to negotiate with GVRD, with private interests and, perhaps also, with senior government to obtain detailed information on the issue, and to determine what areas in the region were appropriate to the sport and less destructive to the ecology than, for example, on Fromme. I believe it was Clr. Crist's intent, also, to respect local residents' right to peaceful enjoyment of their private property.

That motion, of course, immediately threatened members of the NSMBA, who seem to believe that, since they were maintaining trails and their illegally-built structures, they had every right to use the mountain as they wished. The tacit implication was that they were doing the District a favour. Cyclists appeared before Council to claim that none of *their* members were causing problems for the neighbourhood and that due to all of the 'economic spin-off' the District should be happy to maintain the biking *status quo*.

Such has been the aggressive reaction from mountain-bikers, that many residents most immediately affected by the problems - and/or who were concerned about damage to the trails, became afraid to appear before Council for fear of retaliation against property or person. In effect, residents were cowed into silence by the cyclists. That this is so, is amply demonstrated by the tone and content of emails being received by Council and, most particularly, by Clr. Crist - some copies of which are now being forwarded to me.

The NSMBA tries to distance itself from those cyclists who engage in inconsiderate trail behaviour and from the threatening, harrassing emails being circulated. That does not wash with me. Many of them use exactly the same phraseology; most - even those from as far away as England, Australia, etc., - contain exactly the same misinformation - and many of them issue thinly-veiled threats against Clr. Crist. Since most of the emails refer to the Association, it is difficult to see how the organization is not implicated in inciting bikers from all over the world to complain to both Council and Clr. Crist over actions which have not even been proposed by either.

The purpose of this email to you now, is to express my *extremely* serious concerns which arise on two fronts:-

1. I am disturbed that no letter appears to have been forwarded to the NSMBA, over the signature of the Mayor, to set the NSMBA straight on the bare facts of the matter; and,
2. That Council is not taking more immediate and assertive action, (a) to protect the North Shore mountains for the sake of the ecology and for all who would enjoy the natural wilderness which surrounds us; and, most important, (b) with GVRD and other government and NGO's to ask them to address the matter in a more timely fashion.

Following the Special Meeting of Council to consider Staff's "Step One" report on the Alpine Strategic Study, I was left uncertain as to how much authority had been given Mr. Ridge to direct Staff to begin an inventory analysis of District trails. If he was not given a clear "OK" to begin that work, I believe he should be, in order that some progress can be made before the summer onslaught - of users of every type.

Next, I would urge Council to, politely but with determination, "get tough" with GVRD to get on with the job. It is absolutely not good enough, for regional agencies [GVRD, GVWD, TransLink etc.] to expect to impose their projects, their fees upon the North Shore, yet all the while put its collective head in the sand when we ask for their assistance on what is, without any doubt, a regional issue.

I suggest, also, that an official letter should immediately be sent out to the NSMBA, asking it to convey corrected information to its members, and that it tell members and other visitors to the Association website to cease and desist threatening Council and individual members of Council for carrying out their elected responsibilities. Contrary to the tone of many of the emails, North Shore mountains do not belong to the bikers - nor, indeed, to any of us.

In addition to advice that meeting dates will appear in District Dialogue, form-letter acknowledgements from the Mayor might also be firm in advising correspondents - and the Association - that the matter is being dealt with 'as a part of the whole' and decisions will be conveyed as they occur.

Lastly, whether citizens are right or wrong in their belief, you have been considered the "green" member of Council. With respect, there's no issue like this one, no time like the present, to 'walk the talk' - to use a modern colloquialism.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Liz James

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