

**Subject: ONCE AGAIN, IN THE DISTRICT OF NORTH VANCOUVER.**

**Date:** Mon, 16 May 2005 15:27:23 -0700

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

**To:** <fonvca@fonvca.org>, "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@dnv.org>, "James Ridge" <James\_Ridge@dnv.org>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>

**CC:** "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@dnv.org>, "James Ridge" <James\_Ridge@dnv.org>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>

A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST;

The District is playing favourites when it comes to structures built in contravention to existing bylaws. Some people build garages, add or make changes to existing buildings or homes without a building permit. When our staff find out, the owners are asked to either remove such illegal structures or seek a variance from Council. This is procedure.

However, word has gotten around that District Council is very lenient. The upshot is that some builders do not advise people that they need a permit. In some cases people do know, but take a chance on their own. Frequently people are told by builders the worst that can happen is that "you will be asked to obtain a Development Variance Permit (DVP) retroactively". "In that case you will have to pay but you will get away with it".

Recently a homeowner built such an illegal addition. When asked to remove it or ask for a variance, the owner ignored the request repeatedly and, according to staff, was even abusive. Apparently he/she had been told that the whole thing was not to be taken seriously. However, when the matter came before Council, who voted in favour of removal, the owner was visibly astonished and upset.

One Councillor remarked that District Council is not consistent. Most of the times she said we are allowing such violations. This is true and is precisely one of the reasons why some people take a risk in the first place. In most municipalities DVP's do not exist at all. A person wishing to make changes to the outside of a house has to apply to the Board of Variance, specifically set up for that person.

Such Boards are outside the jurisdiction of Councils and will approve changes only if it is a case of hardship. I have, on numerous occasions suggested that we do the same and do away with the DVP process altogether. We could save ourselves a great deal of money and it would also send a clear message to the community that we take the Community Planning process seriously.

Under this process, it is the community which decides setbacks and the height of buildings in any given neighbourhood. It adds credibility to the community driven planning process and discourages speculators from imposing changes at the expense of neighbourhoods, while they themselves may not even live there. To allow changes in violation of guidelines is also disheartening to volunteers spending countless hours on the planning process in the belief that it will protect both their investment and liveability.


The real issue, however, is that the whole matter is questionable for a far more serious reason. While the District staff are doing their job on one hand, on the other hand the District is turning an apparent blind eye to such violations including one on Riverside Drive, for example. In that case, an owner has built a large illegal structure close to the River in violation of every conceivable bylaw, but despite my repeated efforts to deal with this, so far nothing has been done to rectify it.

This, in all likelihood, is widely known and may be one of the reasons why the District lacks credibility and why some people try take risks. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander I suppose, but it

certainly does not make for good government.

Ernie Crist

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