

A Culture of Soft Corruption?

As a community, most don't like where local government is leading us. We don't want four-story apartment buildings, certainly not in our neighborhoods. And we don't want to be taxed to build housing for others or buy buses with no riders.

Jackson Hole is the most generous and giving community you will find anywhere. But we don't want to subsidize businesses that underpay their workers. Hotels charge Jackson Hole prices. They should pay Jackson Hole wages.

We have the right to expect leaders who will speak truth. Too often we've been given social engineering and manipulation.

We don't have clear, concise policy, and that invites gamesmanship. Backdoor deals and secret negotiations happen in the confusion of overly complex regulations. It leads to development the community never wanted, failed projects, landslides and massive holes in the ground downtown.

Our elected officials should state simple policies all can understand. For instance: "100% mitigation." No wiggle room, no carve outs for special interest groups or pet projects. One policy for everyone.

Planners should implement policy fairly. That's their job. And it doesn't require hundreds of pages of minutia only a PhD planner can understand.

We've been headed in the wrong direction for over a decade. Our government has been producing convoluted documents written by consultants skilled at urbanizing small town communities.

Big growth tycoons have been exploiting gray areas for too long. And shrewd developers have been working with planners and electeds to build massive projects that aren't by the book. The

recent lawsuit against the County and Alliance of Route 390 Neighbors is what can happen when citizens decide they've had enough.

The developer probably thinks he was promised something that government didn't deliver, and now he is suing to get it. He had his meetings, got his advice, winks and head-nods. He wants his \$14,000,000.

We're fortunate this sordid activity is coming to light. Now that it's out in the open, it might change. The Alliance of Route 390 Neighbors stood up for the community and what's right. They refused to allow blatant manipulation by county leaders. Unfortunately, they will now have to spend even more \$\$\$ to fight the lawsuit.

Here's another example of manipulation. During a joint town and county meeting reviewing Tribal Trails and an overall traffic study of the valley, a county engineer remarked that it appeared some of the documentation had come to a forgone conclusion that Tribal Trails would be built.

"Ideally, you would move forward with ALL options open including a 'take no action' outcome," he said. "You would have nothing predetermined from the start and this [documentation] seems to do that." He was stating the obvious.

The documentation the engineer reviewed clearly showed the decision had already been made. It likely was not a mistake. Insiders had decided in advance.

On the mitigation issue, a county commissioner also took note of manipulation, stating, "I feel like we are being railroaded into a result that the planning department wants to arrive at."

Folks, the truth is we have a swamp with a culture of soft corruption. Vote for candidates that will change that, not those that have practiced it.

*Simple policy helps
fight manipulation*
