

The other side of the story...

Soft-Corruption in Local Politics?

Corporate ethics rules often say “avoid even the appearance of any impropriety.” Apparently local government doesn’t do this. They fight the ‘outside’ evils by writing small-town legislation on renter’s rights or human rights or e-bikes or...

Fighting the evil ‘outside’ is always easier than looking-within, but the inside is what needs cleaning. The soft-corruption inside local government has been ignored for too long. Some say manipulation is a regular order of business.

We each are responsible for our own behavior; that’s everyone’s first obligation. Leaders, especially our elected officials, should set a good example. But local government has set a low bar for their own behavior. Here are three examples.

Mayor Pete Muldoon ran on a subsidized housing platform and a “less talk, more action” slogan. Now he’s delivered, especially for himself. Last February, the Housing Trust told him he would get a rental in their proposed Redmond project.

The same project that the Town forked over \$4M for. Maybe that’s what \$4M buys you these days.

And while town hadn’t budgeted any money for affordable housing, and the voters having said NO to housing only four months earlier, town council with the mayor’s vote did indeed make the \$4-million ‘donation’ in March 2017.

At some point, the mayor should have disclosed that he was promised a unit. The Housing Trust shares some scrutiny as well for offering what looks too much like a kickback.

The whole sordid affair shows a lack of integrity. It’s the mayor shouting: “Women and children be damned, that lifeboat is mine!”

The guy who promised his supporters affordable housing during his campaign took the first one.

The Bar J fiasco is a second example of bad judgement, low integrity, this time by the planning department. Rather than explaining the Land Development Regulations to HRH developers, they explained how to circumvent them.

The County Planning Department may have been over zealous on housing. But they’ve got a dilemma. The electeds want more, always more housing. The neighbors want to keep their community character. Planners may have focused too heavily on the end-run zoning change that would make the developer a windfall profit.

Luckily, someone stood up for the neighbors, the folks along the Village Road. But the Alliance of Route 390 Neighbors, a community group, shouldn’t have to do government’s job.

Did planners tell the developer about the pitfalls in jamming 69 homes onto property zoned for just seven? Apparently HRH doesn’t think so or they wouldn’t be suing the county for \$14-million.

Then there’s the Budge Slide, which suspiciously coincides with town council’s obsession to bring Walgreens to Jackson. Ex-Mayor Mark Barron led the charge to get the deal done. Town even signed an indemnity agreement absolving the contractor of liability as he cut away the hillside.

We’re all familiar with the landslide disaster that followed. Litigation drags on, and taxpayers keep paying the legal bills for this fiasco.

Folks, we can’t pretend this behavior is OK. There’s an election in November. Choose people with integrity. Elect candidates who will listen to the voters, not the special interests.

*Choose candidates
who have integrity*
