

Letters to the Editor

In the November issue of the North Douglas Herald, we printed a letter that had been read at the October 16th Drain Civic Center meeting by Cemetery Committee Chairperson Anne Campbell. It was in regard to the treatment by Drain's Mayor and City Council, towards the dissolving of the Civic Center and Cemetery Committees that dragged across four City Council meetings. This has caused some contention that has reverberated through the community, so at the start of the November Council meeting, Mayor Sparhawk read a statement that seemed to take issue with the criticisms and dispelled several points of Anne's statement. At the same time there was a contradiction to several points because the Mayor admitted "dissolve" was not the best word, even though it was used across many meetings and the resolution stated as such. Additionally, although every public speaker at each meeting was in favor of keeping the Committees, the Mayor claimed to privately had conversations with citizens who disagreed but wanted to avoid discontent with their neighbors. It seemed prudent to approach the Mayor and ask for clarification and explanation. Mayor Sparhawk responded with the very statement she gave at the November Council meeting and it was printed in the December issue, last month. The following are some of the letters I have received this month in regards to the Mayor's response.

- Rusty

Dear Editor,

I don't have much to say, except that the letter I wrote (and that you published) was one that I read at the October Civic Center committee meeting that took place after the October city council meeting where they voted to get rid of the city-sponsored civic center committee. They voted to dissolve the committee after chair, Candy Vickery, asked them to postpone the vote until they could have a work session with council (as the cemetery committee did), and work on a new ordinance/resolution (also as the cemetery committee did).

At the same meeting, they voted to accept the new resolution crafted by the cemetery committee after said work session, keeping that committee intact and sponsored by the city, with an updated vision and mission.

In my letter, I stated that Mayor Sparhawk lied about contacting Candy five times to tell her to request a work session. What I based this statement on, was the fact that a city councilor approached Candy after the council meeting and told her that the mayor relayed that fact, that she had contacted Candy five times. Candy said that she had not contacted her at all, and that she had been checking her phone and her email, as she was out of town on a personal matter. After I read that letter at the meeting, Mayor Sparhawk, who was present, stated that she told Candy, about five times in a casual conversation, after a council meeting to set up the work session. I was wrong about the interaction between the mayor and Candy. I was under the impression that Candy was contacted five separate times, not told approximately five times in one conversation that she should initiate the work session on her own.

It was also stated at this meeting by a resident of Drain and former city council person that she didn't believe that mentioning something in a casual conversation after a meeting was the same as a formal request for a committee chair to set up

a work session, and neither do I. When I asked the city council for a work session for the cemetery committee, council agreed, and the work session for the cemetery committee and council was all taken care of by the city manager. I wasn't told I had to set it all up as the committee chair like Candy was. The city manager contacted committee members and city council members with a selection of dates to choose from, then she set the date and time for the meeting, provided the agenda, and led the discussion.

I thought that the Civic Center committee deserved the same opportunity, which was the purpose of the letter I read at the meeting. The fact that the two committees were handled differently caused me to question if the city had another intention or planned use for the building. A couple of years ago, the previous city manager made a plan for city hall to move into the civic center temporarily (although there was no timeline or plan shared with the library or the community) and I was fearful that with the lack of transparency before, that this might be happening again. I am glad to hear Mayor Sparhawk state that they do not have a plan to use the building for something it was not intended for.

In a previous city council meeting, I expressed that while the building is owned by the city of Drain, it belongs to the community, who raised the funds for the building. It was specifically built to house a library and a community center. I hope going forward that the city understands that this isn't "just a building", as a council person called it. There is an annual grant from the estate of Mildred Whipple, administered by the Oregon Community Foundation, with the sole purpose to maintain the building, and I hope that the city is transparent and will share with the community how those funds are used to maintain and improve our Civic Center, and keep it as the jewel that it was intended to be

Thank you,

Anne Campbell

Dear Editor

In response to the letter read, and statement, by Mayor Sparhawk at the November Drain City Council Meeting, I would like to clarify several points made. I have served the City and community of Drain in many capacities over the last 45 years including a term on the city council. I know it is not always easy to find volunteers and that city government, done well, requires time and effort.

The Civic Center and Cemetery Committee's dissolution were handled poorly from the beginning. The committees were never approached with concerns, we were not informed that our committees were to be dissolved. No specific plans for a different committee or structure for the Civic Center was ever discussed in meetings or shared with the committees themselves. When we along with the public discovered that the two committees were to be on the agenda to be dissolved, many community members showed up to city council, submitted letters and testified. All comments were in favor of keeping the committees! The council members gave little or no response to citizens concerns during the meetings.

I was never contacted by the mayor. I approached her to ask what was going on after city council. She spoke with me at the end of the sidewalk. I never received an email, phone call or letter requesting a work session. When I spoke up formally during the final council meeting requesting postponement of the Second Reading / final vote I was listened to with no response, just given stone faced attention.

I agree with the mayor. We are all friends, neighbors, we all live, work and volunteer in this small town. While City Council has the final say in many situations it is important that community input be listened to and valued!

Respectfully,

Candy Vickery

Dear Editor,

In response to the Mayor's statement.

OK, let's just talk about the use of the word dissolve. She says in her statement that was unintentional, but in the four months of meetings, they never bothered to change that word. The City Council could have at any time, rewritten the statement so it didn't include the word dissolve, but they chose not to do that. Therefore, they really did mean dissolve. We have to go by the written word, not what they "really meant", but didn't actually say.

What about the statement "I lied about asking a chair to contact the city administrator about a work session". At the last Civic Center committee meeting (that should be recorded), the chair brought this up. Counselor Decker said to the chair that the mayor told her the chair had been contacted five times about setting up a work session and hadn't responded. Mayor Sparhawk spoke and said what really happened is that she had mentioned in one conversation five times that the chair should contact the city administrator.

Those are two very different things. Also, why did the Civic Center chair have to contact the city administrator to set up a work session question? The cemetery committee chair didn't have to do that. The city actually set up the work session without any contact from Anne. Why are the two committees being treated so differently? I wish I believe There's just so much that is wrong with that statement, but again, she seems to be able to just make whatever statements she wants without backing them up with any facts.

Also, I find it concerning that the mayor and city council seems to be prioritizing citizen comments made outside of public meeting (and the public hearing for the committees), rather than the comments made by citizens on public record. Not once was the 'in favor' side brought up during any of the public meetings.

Thank you.

Valarie Johns

Editor:

First let me begin by stating, the articles and reporting are impeccable, grossly factual well written and investigated. Now to the business at hand, the "Drain Mayor's Response"

A Reply.

[Within the first column first paragraph, the last Sentence:] "Lies, rumors, finger pointing, assigning blame, hateful words, all promote division and it needs to stop."

Bravo! Such words of conviction and command!, however. Having read the deliberations of the Continental Congress, the United States Constitution more times than I can recall, various States' constitutions, and, at no point in/of those readings was there any reference that Mayor Sparhawk has unambiguous authority to explicitly prohibit free speech of/by the citizenry. You Mayor and all other elected and or appointed, are held to a higher standard of professional responsibility.

Lies: You should heed the words you speak, Mayor given that the February 14th, 2022 Minutes reporting of the "illegal" January 18th, 2022 Executive Session(*I) meeting, is attested to and as being present at all times during that Executive Session by an applicant who is/was/still is grossly underqualified according to the City Charter Contracts for and in the hiring of city administrator that "Must possess a Bachelor's Degree and have government work experience" (Application).

Speaking directly to the appointment of a Civic Center Committee Member at the City's April 2022 council meeting: It has always been the policy, practice, procedure and protocol that the two committees can be appointed "at large" which has always meant within the Urban Growth Boundary. Yet it was represented that "at large" meant anybody which allowed another personal acquaintance to be appointed that lives outside the Urban Growth Boundary

[And in the First Column, Second Paragraph, First Sentence:] Civic Center Committee Meeting testimony of October 16th, 2023 contradicts your written words ("I indeed asked the chair to call and ask for a work session") when you openly admitted that conversation was after a city council meeting, that there were no calls to the Chair and further the Chair did ask for a work session but was ignored

I received this letter from Michael several months ago and shortly after hearing from him, he stopped by to chat about his cause in person. To say it is his cause was an understatement, passion is a more apt description of his dedication to this dilemma for so many veterans and especially combat veterans, who thought they were "serving for Citizenship". Mike's brother, originally from Mexico, joined the Army and went to Viet Nam under this promise. After serving the Army in Viet Nam, it only takes only the smallest of legal issues to wind up, as Mikes brother, deported, without benefits and discarded by the government and country he served.

Dear Editor,

My brother lives in Baja and runs an office that has been trying to get the Deported Veterans home for almost 20 years. He has tried all of the political processes of getting Congress to submit bills only to see them die on the vine from apathy. He is trying to initiate an old fashion letter drive. This is my letter sent to my President at his address. Any help to spread the word would be appreciated

-Michael

Dear Mr. President

I have your back. I voted for you.

I'm asking you to do your sworn oath duty to serve and protect our nation.

As Commander in Chief it is your responsibility to care for all those under your command who took the same oath to serve and protect.

You can find info and resources to protect from this type fraud at www.oregon.gov/ccb. OR call Oregon Consumer Hotline at 1-877-877-9392, open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Dear Editor,

Could you please let people know if they did not request a contractor, do not do business with them. Have you heard of "Gypsy Contractors"? They have been targeting older residents in our rural area. This last group went to a lot of houses in the area, including my home. Trying to sell us driveway paving cheap because they had leftovers

by city council. My Question to you Mayor: Is WHY you did not support Councilor Lymath & Decker during the July Council Meeting, when they both opted for the Civic Center Committee to have a work session?

Rumors: While the former city administrator had his faults, he was no thief nor ever included overtime hours in his fixed salary pay cheque as articulated by the current alleged city administrator to several community members and organizations.

Hateful Words: The Recall Papers against me instrumented by your close personal real estate friends were filled with lies, rumors, hateful words to assign blame and to promote division by using your position as Moderator on Facebook to promote the Recall.

(*I)Oregon Government Ethics Commission Complaints: 22-017XSM, 22-019XSM, 22-020XSM and those Stipulated Facts

Promotion of Division: By your own admission [in Column 1 Paragraph 2,] "numerous citizens that have spoken with some council members in favor of getting rid of these committees and see no reason they should be public officials... didn't speak publicly because they didn't want to start an argument with their friends and neighbors." Concealment is a form of "Lies" with intent to promote division by operating behind the scenes.

[Last Paragraph of the First Column:] "light discussion"? ! If it was such a light discussion WHY was the permission given to bring forth two public hearing items the following month. Is the phrase "light discussion" an "unintentional use" or a Lie, Rumor, or an attempt at misdirection.

[The whole Second Column:] If the word "dissolved" was an "unintentional use" then please explain WHY the word "dissolved" was not changed to something more palatable in the following 3 months Agenda Items. This is also a Lie because the Charter uses the word "dissolve" directed at Committees.

And in closing, such kind tender words if only the "don't have to agree" was not met with retaliation, lies, rumors, and hateful words.

Respectfully,

Jo A. Barker, a 62 year old elder, and Former City Councilperson

In our nation's history many who took the oath were not born here and served with honor.

Today there are thousands of soldiers, although not being born on our nation's soil, took the same oath, served Honorably, and have been banished from living and healthcare in the same country they served and bled for. Left behind because of paperwork and petty politics. Many have died waiting to return. Only when dead are they allowed back home.

End this travesty and injustice to our nation's warriors. Bring all Deported Veterans home. One stroke of your executive pen is all it takes to do your sworn duty.

Sincerely and losing patience

Michael T. Hinojosa

Drain, Oregon

from a big job. We told them NO, And I have other neighbors said same thing NO. But there are a lot of homes contacted, most said no but my neighbor was scammed.

If you drive hayhurst rd you will see some. I have sent your contact info to neighbor, don't know if she will contact you.

-Judy