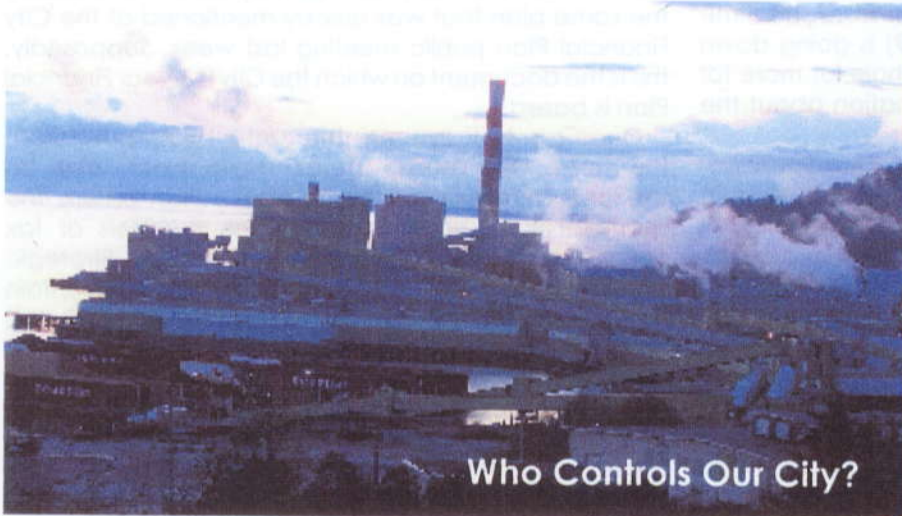


The Watchdog Bulletin

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Who Controls Our City?

Important stories in our Community

- City Signs Joint Venture!
- New 70-page Zoning Bylaw
- Higher (and higher) taxes!

"With the signing of the Joint Venture, the rape, pillage and plunder of Powell River will begin."

CITY SIGNS JOINT VENTURE! *Breaking News by Deep Snout*

Reliable sources have informed this reporter that City officials signed the Joint Venture on Wednesday, May 17th. (Today's Secret #11) Catalyst Paper Corporation has yet to sign the deal and it is unknown whether the Sliammon Development Corp. has signed it.

The Mayor and Council don't plan to make any public announcement about the signing until June 10th (Secret #2) when they are to be joined by B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell, 'corporate welfare' friend of Catalyst (Secret #3).

Mayor and Council are committing the residents of Powell River to a corporate deal that the public knows little about. Last February, the City received letters from Powell River citizens asking them specific questions about the Joint Venture. (See JV Questions at <http://ourpowellriver.com>.) To date the City has refused to respond to these questions. In addition, hundreds of signatures were collected on letters requesting the City not to sign the Joint Venture. Again, responses to these letters have not been forthcoming. Our elected officials have used a pathetically feeble 'confidentiality' excuse in refusing to reveal any information

about the Joint Venture.

(See What We Know About the JV at <http://ourpowellriver.com>.) The Mayor has indicated that the reason for the secrecy was "business interests." All the secret backroom meetings by our City Council were also justified on similar grounds.

Any information that has been obtained has come from either Catalyst or Sliammon Development Corp. representatives, not from our City officials who have the legal responsibility to keep us informed. Now that the deal is signed, will they answer our questions as they promised or will they continue their bluster?

Article censored due to Formosa lawsuit against The Watchdog

through property taxes.

While Powell River taxpayers have experienced large tax increases—11.5% in 2005 and 9.5% in 2006—the Catalyst mill has received a \$3 million tax cut over 5 years. This is year 3 with the mill's tax cut at \$600,000. Next year, it will be \$800,000 and, in the final year, \$1 million. So the story on your property tax increases is just beginning.

Look for more increases to pay for the huge costs for servicing the 803 acres of JV land as well as potential environmental clean-up costs.

Councillor Sandi Tremblay, who has the Finance portfolio, stated last week that the City had not included any amounts for the JV in the 2006 budget or beyond. (See the City's Financial Plan at <http://ourpowellriver.com>.)

If there are no funds available in the City's budget for the Joint Venture costs, where are the substantial funds for servicing the land and the environmental clean-up going to come from, let alone the monthly mortgage to Catalyst?

Most likely, the money will come from a 'borrowing'. And any 'borrowing' is money the City will have to pay back—which means it is money that will have to be collected from City taxpayers through additional tax increases sooner or later. This would be in addition to the \$4 million our City officials plan to borrow in 2009/2010 for a new Waste Treatment Facility. So when you get your 2006 property tax bill in June with the 9.5% tax increase, remember, it is only the beginning.

Hold onto your pocketbooks and watch out for the falling trees!

Lupo's Whammy May 2nd COW Meeting

'Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!'

Greetings from City Hall—now that the City has decided to up our taxes again, the green pastures are drying out faster than a gardener's hands at this time of year. While one group (guess who?) is going down in tax share, you and I get to pay a whole lot more for a whole lot less service and no information about the future of our City.

The COW meeting was chaired by Councillor DeGraag who got it going by pointing to an error in the 'certified' minutes of the previous, April 18th, COW meeting. The minutes claimed DeGraag was present. DeGraag insisted this was not correct. The minutes were revised.

A follow-up letter from Dave Harris regarding his January presentation at the COW concerning our City's controversial Section 21 zoning (which makes the Millsite out-of-bounds for zoning regulation by the City) was on the agenda. However, David was, once again, ignored by our elected officials. "Mark this correspondence 'received' and file." (See David Harris' letter and his Peak viewpoint at <http://ourpowellriver.com>.) Without some powerful magic, there was no way any thoughtful consideration would get the COW's attention this day! And, nothing really did.

Many of you will remember city engineer Don McKinnon claiming that it was necessary to forego the mandatory bidding process last year (on a several hundred thousand dollar refit contract at the Rec Complex's pool area) because City Hall wanted to get the walls around the pool down before our November 2005 municipal election. A bidding process on the refit contract would have gone beyond election day. So, the City awarded the contract on a 'no-bid' basis to ensure that a new City Council would not change the plan.

The COW was told by the Director of Public Works that 'the recently finished refit is being subjected to the same humidity problems that caused the previous cladding to rot!' Let's look at this: Something like an engineering oversight caused the original material failure (cladding rusted due to high humidity). Then, an expensive refit which did not take the cause into consideration before the contract was finalized.

Who is responsible for this abysmal oversight? Will this person play a role in JV development? I think your WATCHDOG should put Deep Snout on this file so we can get to the bottom of this disaster.

Lupo's Double Whammy May 16th COW Meeting

*This week's mantra is:
'We're so broke, we can't afford to pay attention!'*

A Strategic Plan by the Council is to be revealed at the next full Council meeting, May 23rd. This is clearly the same plan that was quickly mentioned at the City Financial Plan public meeting last week. Supposedly, this is the document on which the City's 5-year Financial Plan is based.

Once again, it appears the cart is being put before the horse. The public should have been able to see and comment on the Strategic Plan before the Financial Plan—which contains the numbers of tax dollars the City will need to implement the Strategic Plan—was developed. Will the Strategic Plan contain the unannounced, but signed, Joint Venture? Will our elected officials continue to play games with us regarding public information on the costs and legalities of the JV, even though they have now signed it?

Under 'New Business' was an item entitled 'Zoning Bylaw Project Notice'. Regina S. reported City staff had been working hard to prepare a draft '70-page bylaw'. Regina also stated that there was "no special project budget" for this work and that "normally, we would contract this out." Guess they wanted to keep the work in-house in order to keep it secret. (I've lost count of the number for this secret. 1478? 2697?)

Regina said City staff hoped to be able to provide the COW with a copy of the 70-page bylaw in June. I can only conclude that this document will represent the City's zoning for the Joint Venture. Will there be a public process to allow citizens to comment and give input? No mention of that at the meeting.

There was a report on "Council Remuneration" supposedly from the Manager of Human Resources, but presented by CAO Stan Westby. He told the COW that Council did enact a bylaw in 2004 to provide itself with automatic pay raises that were triggered by a number of factors including an annual indexed 'cost-of-living adjustment.' Westby claimed that such a scheme would make City official and staff raises 'less political.' I think he meant 'less visible.' Westby added that the results of the remuneration bylaw were in line with other cities. Lupo will check out the comparison data with other cities and report more on this later.



And finally, remember to come out and 'greet' your Premier on June 10th, and let him know how you feel about the Joint Venture...or anything else.

Pun of the Month:

A group of chess enthusiasts checked into a hotel and were standing in the lobby discussing their recent tournament victories. After an hour, the manager came out of the office and asked them to disperse.

"But why?" they asked, as they moved off.

"Because," he said, "I can't stand chess nuts boasting in an open foyer."