

Can You Say... Transparent Government?

During the last campaign we heard a lot from our new councilmen about transparent government and representation for all citizens and view points. According to Bill Clark, Jerry Johnson, and Alan Gilbert, they were to be our saviors. **They were all about fairness and a voice for everyone.** Their administration was to be void of backroom deals and personal agenda. **It was to be an administration that would respect and represent all citizens.** They pledged to allow diversity on committees, and to follow recommendations from P&Z. These promises were the cornerstone of their campaigns.

Only one year later it appears that these same councilmen have turned there collective backs on all of their virtuous rhetoric. They appear willing to blame anyone for anything, as well as, do whatever it takes to silence anyone that disagrees with their agenda, or expresses view points that bring their actions into question. They began by stacking committees with like-minded appointees, and are now apparently willing to dismiss volunteers from those same committees should the committee members challenge their views. There does not seem to be a limit to what these councilmen will do to cover up their inadequacies as town leaders.

By now it is apparent to many that these councilmen will use anyone or any reason as an escape-goat for their own inactions. For the better part of the last year they blamed everything on the previous council. Once that strategy began to wear thin, they then blamed the P&Z for holding up the process. Apparently they do not realize that council has legal authority to make necessary decisions without P&Z's recommendation.

Now they have stooped to removing planning commissioners, suggesting that one single commissioner was the new reason they have been unable to achieve their goals. What will be next? **Will we begin to systematically see department heads and staff be blamed and then terminated?** When will these

councilmen realize that the **problems they are blaming on everyone else are a product of their own deficient actions?**

At the November 21st council meeting, these councilmen proved there are no limits to what they will do when they voted to deny Commissioner Dan Wilcox a reappointment to the P&Z. Mr. Wilcox has served the commission for three years. Virtually anyone that has ever been to a P&Z meeting, whether they agree with Mr. Wilcox's view points or not, can attest to his competence and contribution to the process. Mr. Wilcox came to the meetings having extensively researched the issues, and prepared to contribute to the process. He brought a clear message that the rules should be followed, and he offered logic and rationale to often complex issues.

Out of the past sixty-five P&Z related meetings, Dan missed one meeting. Two other commissioners that were also up for reappointment have missed a combined total of approximately thirty-two of those same meetings, yet these councilmen felt they were making a decision that was in the best interest of the citizens by voting to deny Dan's reappointment and confirm others with severe attendance problems.

Since their election, these councilmen have appointed four new P&Z members. **Of those appointments they have yet to allow their fellow council members, Ms. Efirid or Mr. Macon, an opportunity to make a single appointment? Clark, Johnson, and Gilbert have blocked those nominations every time.** Is this a sign of respect for all view points? Are these the acts of town leaders following the principles of open government? **Between Efirid and Macon they have thirty-three years serving on our town council. Surely their tenure entitles them to at least one out of every three appointments.** But less we forget – that would not allow our new councilmen to manipulate the makeup, and ultimately the outcome, of P&Z recommendations.

What about citizen complaints? Surely these councilmen are willing to address complaints?

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Wrong again. These same councilmen that blasted the pervious council for ignoring similar complaints, have continually failed to address citizen complaints regarding the conduct of two of their P&Z appointees. Over six months since those complaints were officially filed, and after repeated attempts to obtain an answer to their complaints, those citizens have never received any form of a response from our Mayor, town attorney, town manager, or anyone else in authority. So much for an open approach to citizen concerns. But again, these complaints were about commissioners these councilmen appointed.

By most accounts, Clark, Johnson, and Gilbert are a dismal failure. They continue to make self-promoting decisions that have no positive bearing on our town's future. They have failed to lead the town, failed to keep their promises, failed to allow staff to do their jobs, and now they are failing to allow diversity within the community and among P&Z. In fact, the only promise they might end up keeping will be their promise to follow P&Z recommendations, of course, that will be a result of them loading the board with a majority of people willing to vote their way.

One year after the election, and constant promises of a master plan and boardwalk revitalization, other than some general discussion, no clear path-forward exist. The only reason there has been any discussion regarding a plan thus far is because the **P&Z members and Councilman Macon collectively put their feet down and called for a master plan.** Up until that time, our new councilmen never uttered the words *master plan*.

While there is no question these councilmen have done damage, we also realize they have not created every problem we have. Nonetheless, they are our town leaders, and as such, it is their responsibility to address these issues and to find ways to solve them, regardless if the issues originated under their watch or someone else's.

These councilmen are sending a message of turmoil and confusion. **Once again, our town has become the laughing stock and the brunt of jokes and negativity. No one takes us seriously.** Even investors that see our town as opportunity for smart growth projects are unwilling to trust in these councilmen to follow the law or to have vision.

Clark, Johnson, and Gilbert promised to bring everyone to the table and promote revitalization, yet they have not taken the first step in that direction. Instead of proactive leadership, they have us in a downward spiral. They have town employees running in circles researching fifty year old information and rummaging through seven year old archives just to be able to blame their actions on past administrations. They have not attracted any new business, nor have they helped existing businesses. **They change the rules as they go, to suit whatever special interest or personal agenda suits their current need.** And while our CBD continues to deteriorate, businesses continue to fail and close, and infrastructure lapses further into disrepair, the new guys seem completely satisfied blaming everyone but themselves.

Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Clark, Mr. Johnson, some of your previous supporters have called for your resignation, we now support that request. Do yourselves, the town, and our future a favor. **Step-down and let people who are willing to serve this town with honor, integrity, and character clean up this mess and embarrassment we call home.**

Have any concerns you would like us to address? Like to make a contribution? Please visit our web site to access our email and PayPal, or mail us. Thank you for your support and your contributions to date.
We're taking a break - see you next year.
Happy Holidays... CFCB