

Over the Back Fence
For Friday November 7, 2008
Approx 630 words

What's in a name?
By Alva Wood

The outgoing village council met for the last time before the November 15 municipal elections.

Administrator Henry Hill had a full agenda of variances, zoning changes, amendments to the Official Community Plan, and salary adjustments.

"I don't think we should make those decisions," says Dunc McMahon, who is not running again. "The next council has to live with those issues," he goes on, "so they should deal with them."

"I agree," says Hector Wentz. He and Yvonne recognized that if he wanted to continue as a councillor, she would have to quit working for the village administration. Or if she continued working, he would have to quit. She won.

So each time Henry introduces a new agenda item, Dunc raises his hand and says, "Move to defer." Dunc may not have gained any brain cells in three years, but at least he learned the lingo.

"Seconded," says Hector.

The meeting would have finished in record time, until Henry brought up an item about street names. The developer of Catarrh by the Slough wanted to build some lanes as part of his strata expansion project, for easier access to the dumpster bins at the back.

"I see no reason to defer this item," Henry says, "since this council already approved the rezoning, the height variance, and the building permit."

The developer submitted some possible lane names. Henry reads them out:

- Crescendo Court
- Del Cappa Chino
- Ritando Route
- Doubleforte Passage
- Semidemiquaver Cadenza
- Allegro Alley

"Oh, jeez," moans Dunc, holding his head in his hands, "This guy must listen to Radio Two."

"What's wrong with that?" demands Hector. It's the first time they've disagreed all night.

"Why doesn't he name them Metallica or Spinal Tap?" Dunc asks.

"Obviously, he took classical music lessons once," suggests Rosie Green. As a pianist herself, she actually knows what some of the terms mean.

"Probably took a music major at university," Dierdre Pollacks guesses, "before he realized he could make more money in real estate."

"I wonder which university," muses retired prof Jake Bowers.

"Fugue U," Dunc mutters under his breath.

Then he realizes he's said something he shouldn't have, and amends, "I mean Fuddle-Duddle U."

Deirdre has been flipping through old council minutes. "Didn't we already approve a list of potential names," she asks, "a couple of years ago?"

Henry looks puzzled. "I thought we did too," he agrees. "Maybe our planning officer can enlighten us."

Freddie Fallis stands up from the desk where he's been playing tic-tac-toe against himself and losing regularly.

"Yes," he confirms, "there was a list of names from council. We also got lists from the Garden Club, the Historical Association, and the Environmental Society."

Jake wants to know what happened to those lists.

"I filed them," replies Freddie confidently.

Rosie wonders what some of the suggested names were.

“I can’t tell you,” says Freddie. “All correspondence is considered confidential,” he explains. “So I only open that filing cabinet to put things in. I never open it to look at what’s inside, in case it’s something I shouldn’t know about.”

“But this IS something that WE should know about,” Deirdre objects. “Could you find those letters for us?”

“Not tonight,” says Freddie. “The M for Miscellaneous file is really fat. I’d have to read through everything all over again,” he says. “Even the stuff I’m not supposed to.”

It’s Jake’s turn to look puzzled. “I thought you managed that department,” he wonders.

“Oh, I do,” replies Freddie. “But only when I wear my manager hat, not my file clerk hat.”

As they’re locking up the offices, Jake turns to Freddie.

“Freddie,” he asks innocently, “in your various functions, do you ever talk to yourself?”

“Of course not,” says Freddie. “That would be a clear mark of mental derangement.”