

March 14, 2006

to cc  
MAR 15 2006

Blaine City Council:

I am reacting to the Council's discussion regarding Bob Anderson's letter-to-the-editor. My first reaction when I read his letter was "here we go again". I did not phone any members of the council regarding his letter. It was my firm belief that the committee he served on would discuss the "inappropriateness" of the letter in light of the purpose of the committee and the volatility of the topic in the community. To have to bring the topic up at a City Council meeting and then apparently only in response to phone calls indicates a need to look at the communication lines within the system. The problem now becomes the Council's as a whole and in listening to the discussion there appears to be some questions raised on how individual Council members view the problem. I would think if a member of the public calls a council member, the council member is obligated to listen to the individual's concerns whether or not they signed a petition that the council member does not agree with. Isn't the use of petitions a democratic procedure for determining public opinion on a topic? Frequently, petitions are signed ( by yours truly) in order to allow the public a say on a matter and not necessarily that the signer agrees with the text of the petition.

The ironic part is that this discussion followed the appointment of several members of the community to a number of commissions and committees. In listening to the discussion regarding these appointments I would be hard pressed to explain to anyone what the procedure is for selection and who was eventually selected. I would hope that when individuals are interviewed for these various committees and commissions that what their role and obligations are , are clearly stated. One was left with the impression that there was confusion as to whether the individual applied or not and whether they agreed to serve.

Having taught school for a number of years the important thing is to be up front about what is acceptable behavior and make certain that you apply the same rules to every student. If you don't, what follows can be living hell! If individuals serving on these committees, commissions and the council itself understand what is acceptable and not acceptable many problems can be avoided. Whether you have rules or not there is still the doctrine of "common sense" and it is a lot easier on the body than the "school of hard knocks".

If there are not guidelines already in place for acceptable behavior and the consequences for display of unacceptable behavior I would think they need to be put in place. Does this infringe on freedom of speech? Probably, however, if you know the rules of the game when it starts you don't waste time arguing with the referee if you violate the rules.

The problem I have is that I am concerned that the amount of time "correcting situations" could be more profitably used on other matters. I want to see the city function efficiently and if a little preparation ahead of times is needed that's okay, because down the line it may prevent needless expenditure of energy to patch up problems that could have been avoided.

Thank you for accepting your jobs on the council and thank you for hearing my concerns. If I didn't care you would not hear from me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis Olason". The signature is fluid and written in dark ink.

Dennis Olason  
860 Georgia Ave.