

NORTH BAY TAXPAYERS' ASSOCIATION

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Council Owes Taxpayers' An Explanation

TO THE EDITOR:

You would think city council would have learned their lesson about keeping secrets!

Their response to the disturbing news about \$3.6 million in unauthorized spending at Memorial Gardens has been to clam up about what happened and what they plan to do about it.

The Mayor told a December news conference that the cost over-run came as a complete surprise to him. He should realize that the best way to avoid surprises is to be open and transparent in sharing pertinent information.

City council owes North Bay taxpayers a complete and honest explanation of why we got a \$3.6 million lump of coal in our Christmas stocking.

The findings of a KPMG audit into the fiasco MUST be released as soon as possible at an OPEN MEETING of city council. There should be no opportunity for councillors and/or city staff to whitewash the content before disclosure. There may be human resource and/or legal issues that cannot be discussed publicly, but KPMG are professionals and can write the report in such a way as to inform the public without disclosing sensitive information.

While we are on the subject of overdue reports, whatever happened to the Chief Administrative Officer's Operational Review that was due to be delivered in September of last year? There were recommendations in KPMG's Fleet Review last July, most notably the suggestion that a third party manager be retained to clean up the inefficiencies in Public Works. (Remember the 32,600 litres of missing fuel?) Why weren't the recommendations implemented?

Considering the lack of oversight at City Hall it is more than likely that Memorial Gardens is not the only project over budget. The North Bay Taxpayers' Association thinks it's time council came clean on the budget status of both the Lakeshore Drive project and the Ferguson Street construction. If one project has been allowed to go so seriously off the rails there's a good chance the same oversight shortcomings exist elsewhere.

In any event, Mayor Al, please put an end to city hall secrecy. We deserve to hear the bad news.

After all, we're paying for it.

Elizabeth Fournier
Executive Member
North Bay Taxpayers' Association