

Test of letter to the editor – Sept 22, 2016

City council continues to impede public exposure of its actions by imposing more obstacles in the way of those who wish to make presentations to council.

At Monday's council meeting a report outlining an amended procedural by-law was referred to the general government committee for a public meeting.

While the new by-law does deal with some additional issues, its main thrust is to make it more difficult to make presentations before council.

What the amendments do not address are instructions to or sanctions for the mayor who is the chair of council meetings and who acts as judge, jury and executioner in these matters. The mayor has demonstrated a general lack of knowledge of the current procedural rules and on numerous occasions a lack of understanding concerning the difference between disrespect and criticism.

The suggested amendments continue to prevent anyone, who in the opinion of the mayor, from bringing to the public's attention any errors made by city staff or council members. They could also effectively prevent anyone from exposing any nefarious or illegal activity by staff or council member that a citizen may have discovered.

The mayor suggests changes are necessary to "bring order to (the presentations) and the fact that council is often caught off guard by issues raised during unregistered presentations. This does not explain the continued lack of reaction from anyone at city hall to the NBTA's concerns raised on several occasions to the Mayor's Plan at council meetings in November and December of last year

The initiative for this sudden amendment to the procedural by-law is clearly due to the embarrassment caused to the mayor, councillors and senior city staff because of the information delivered by the NBTA and other concerned citizens at council meetings.

Rather than correcting the situation and instructing senior financial staff to correct or explain the information they are presenting to council, the mayor opts to change the procedural rules to stifle comments by the public.

This is an example of our open and transparent North Bay administrators who are feverishly attempting to effectively isolate themselves from public scrutiny.