

Written by Greg J. Edwards
Friday, 01 April 2011 07:20



Speakers have cast so much birdseed about at Delta's suspended? adjourned? and now-secretive Southlands-ALR public hearings, I don't know whether to tweet? twitter? chirp? or squawk?

But I do know that I want to pat Sean Hodgins on the back for his fitting show of Irish humor: His choice of parrot-green T-shirts for Century Group's supporters to don is great irony.

But I wonder, Why has Delta's mayor and council said nothing to dispel the myths they've parroted?

Myth 1: Drainage: During opening comments, a Delta manager explained that drainage is not and will not be an issue. Why? For two reasons: One: Tsawwassen, including Southlands Farm, drains to the 12th Avenue dike pump at a cheap rate to taxpayers, so drainage will not be an added expense for Deltans should Southlands Farm return to the ALR.

Two: Southlands Farm has its own internal drainage system that the Department of Agriculture helped design and install years before Century Group took it over. Again, drainage is not an issue.

But several parrot-green shirts ignored these facts and prattled on and on about drainage: What about the drainage? The drainage will cost me, Joe Taxpayer, blah, blah, blah, if Southlands is returned to the ALR.

Mayor and Council did not dispel this nonsense. Why?

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Myth 2: The Spetifore-Southlands Farm is poor farmland. Again, parrot-greens got up and retold this tall tale ad nauseam even though documents dug up from archives attest to this farm's fertile history, and even though recent agriculturalists' reports confirm its very arable nature.

Mayor and Council said nought. Why?

Myth 3: Even though there's no zoning change involved in returning the Southlands to the ALR, parrot-greens got up and engendered fear of a lawsuit if this land's zoning is changed.

Council said nothing to allay this unfounded fear Why?

Myth 4: "No due process" is another of the parrot-greens' slogans: Century Group haven't had "due process." The Hodgins should be given "due process" before Council applies to return the Southland Farm to the ALR.

Mayor and Council failed to explain that the Southlands' return to the ALR does not deny Century Group the right to re-submit their development plan to Council. Why?

Besides, Century Group took over the Spetifore-Southlands, not before, but just after, Delta had held the longest-running hearings in Canadian history, during which Deltans gave their resounding "No!" to its development. Those hearings are part of the "due process" that the parrot-greens ignore.

What's more, since those hearings in '89, Century Group recovered their money and more when they sold acreage to the Boundary Bay Regional Park, a deal that is also part of Century's history of "due process".

And, over the years, Delta has refused other Century offerings of free land for permission to

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develop, offerings and refusals that part of "due process".

Plus, the parrot-greens ignore Century's successful four-year public relations campaign of glossy mail-outs, charrettes, public hearings and open houses, complete with barn flies on the cookies, meant to enamor us all with their Southlands plan, which would spoil the efficient farming of at least two-thirds of these 500-plus acres by dividing it up into small unproductive hobby farms; and which would put condos on wildlife habitat, which is on a flood plain, prone to liquefaction during earthquakes, and rising sea levels due to global warming.

If "due process" has been denied anybody, it has been denied to Deltans who've fought for over 30 years to preserve the Spetifore-Southlands Farm for food, and to protect Delta's stretch of the Pacific Flyway, a north-south migration route for the world's birds: Why?

There's evidence of the Spetifore Farm's irregular removal from the ALR back in '81, evidence that includes a letter from a former provincial cabinet minister, Stephen Rogers, to a former premier, Bill Van der Zalm. Now there's fertile ground for a legal inquiry.

Myth 6: No matter how many times brave little Debbie McBride stands up to assure Tsawwassenites that Century Group will never set up a piggery, a mushroom farm, a giant chicken barn, or a light-emitting greenhouse butt up against their built-up area--for a long list of reasons--parrot-greens hop up to repeat the scare stories, implying that if Century Group, Tsawwassen's largest landlord, doesn't get their way, they will have a snit and foul their own nest. Of course, Century Group never dispel this whopper. And Council has never countered it, either.

Recalling that Mayor Lois Jackson is never shy of protecting herself from voters who take her to task at public hearings for failing to live up to her past commitments to preserve farms and habitat, I chatted with her before the third evening of hearings. I told her I couldn't understand why so many speakers were allowed to pass off nonsense as fact. She didn't explain why she's quick to defend herself, but she did say that Council's duty at public hearings is to listen, that Council makes its decisions based on fact, not nonsense, that Deltans' questions will be addressed at the end of the hearings--dare I call them smearings?

Since then, citing a lack of consensus--fueled in great part by the nonsense parroted by the

Sean Hodgins' Ironic Humor: chooses parrot-green T-shirts for Century Group's Southlands development

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parrot-green T-shirt gang--Mayor Jackson has decreed that the Southlands-ALR hearings are suspended till April 14 so that she can hold a closed summit with the developer and whomever she deems fit to invite from the eco-side. What's more, the mayor is keeping the eco-siders' IDs a secret, an official secret. So, many are wondering, How can public hearings be held in seclusion from voters? And, did Mayor Jackson and Council let the parrot-greens spread their birdseed so that she could use "no consensus" as an excuse to hold in camera meetings, a.k.a a mayor's summit?

Their birdseed begs another question: Has Century Group been promoting their Southland Plan in order to talk up their land's value before sale to an eco-trust? Perhaps the parrots' stuff have got to me, but think about it: Why else would Century propose condos for their flood plain, which is prone to liquefaction, and claim that their larger tract is infertile only to turn around to say that the land that they swear is worthless as a farm has great soil for students to learn farming, and organic gardens, and hobby farms?

More 'seed, please. The parrots are hungry.

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