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A Positive Next Step



Well, another phase of the Sustainable Campbell River program is out of the way, with the completion of the first public input forum. It was an interesting exercise and one that has left me with the feeling that this may actually result in something positive for the community.

It's not without its shortcomings, though. There is supposedly a 20 person steering committee in place, but only a few of them bothered to attend and those that did showed me that the committee is likely made up of the same old faces that we see on a half dozen advisory boards and committees in the City. Our economic development team was represented by only one person from the board. New organizations, such as the newly formed Campbell River Creative Industry Council, had only a couple of representatives. I also saw only one City Councilor there (and the Mayor), but that might have been a good thing, in hindsight. I am not suggesting that they needed an active part, but they should be listening to what the people of Campbell River are thinking. I realize that many of these people have busy lives, but so do I.

These small issues aside, however, it was an overall success. The discussions were constructive and I actually found myself having discussions with people that are often on the polar opposite side of my own opinions. I even sat at a table with the City Operations Manager and was pleasantly surprised to see him do something that I more often see him not doing; listening to citizens of Campbell River.

I am usually "anti-consultant" when it comes to entering into yet another consulting process on a subject that we have gone over a dozen times before, usually with the same consultant. This time seemed different, though. The consulting team was made up of young and enthusiastic professionals, who offered direction but looked to the community for ideas. It was also the first time that I had been to a community forum where the citizen input was interactive, rather than simply having a facilitator standing in front of an easel and writing down ideas. To see an aerial map of Campbell River and have a facilitator say, "here are blocks that represent various types of buildings. Build your vision of downtown", was, to say the least, refreshing.

The real test of the process is yet to come. In this 10-month development of the new Sustainable Official Community Plan, there are community workshops and surveys that will gather even more community input. All of this information, along with a couple of decades worth of other OCP consulting projects, will be sorted, compared and organized into a final plan. That plan should be the one that guides our development and growth for the next few decades. The only things that can stand in its way are bureaucracy, shortsightedness, ego and indifference.

My one and true hope is that these hurdles fall and make way for our future.