

WILL COUNCIL LISTEN TO THE MAJORITY OR WHAT

Thirty-one citizens had the nerve to beseech council Wednesday evening to seriously consider the property tax rate, six for staying the course the City Manager has plotted. But twenty-five asked, "Where is your heart? And not all were elderly facing financial catastrophe; there were those who bought in Suffolk thinking it was an affordable place to bring up their young families. Thousands have learned that Surprising Suffolk is not such a sweet deal with clean air, airy meadows and gently running streams.

In spite of the fact that we will be drowning in homes already on the drawing board the Council finds reasons to accept new development proposals that only compound the problems of providing services to more and more residents and their offspring needing more schools. That plus fire and police protection, sewers, water, and you name it. Adding new citizens is not the answer to our plight; adding jobs and businesses is.

One speaker even insisted that the notice of that evenings meeting was deliberately planted in the sports section so less citizens would find it. True or not, enough did come and suffer the hard seats that certainly added to their discomfort. Had the opportunity to face council taken place in some high school auditorium there may have been hundreds with the same theme, "you are breaking us and making our homes unaffordable."

Of course there were Messrs Schmidt and Godwin who show up at council meetings on a regular basis to vent their spleens in less than polite terms but they speak for a great number of citizens who may be tempted to exact their revenge at the polls. Roger Leonard said it best when he stated the city manager was guilty of insubordination by failing to provide Council with widely disparate budgets as they requested. But there was barely a whimper from council members when he suggested seven cents. And that budget was designed, as expected, to make us fearful of terrible cuts in services.

It is understandable that many "affluent" citizens want their city to be a shining jewel. And so do the less affluent but right now are more interested in paying the increasing bills that wipe out their savings and severely crimp their life style. They once had faith in those who created the term, "It's a good time to be in Suffolk." Who would have thought we would be victims of an absurd method of calculating "home market values?" It may be legal but how can this form of "eviction" be justified?

Perhaps our politicians in Richmond will sit on their hands forever but our local seven, who some say are on council because they need the money for property taxes, should now rise to the occasion. City managers and school superintendents are known for pie in the sky estimates that include salary increases for themselves and their staffs, and what they estimate is absolutely necessary to stay their course. I suggest they live with the same "bump in the road" they are forcing on the taxpayers. This budget fiasco affords new candidates for Council a golden opportunity...sit down with the \$1.06 budget, go through it with a red pencil to show voters how you would shave it by twenty cents...pretend there was no increase in assessments.

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Lynette White, Director of Tourism, presented info on the Dismal Swamp that was clear and honest; Chesapeake has won the battle for the government funds to open it up for tourists and we should quit wasting our efforts. I love the way Linda Johnson put it. "The squirrel has left the tree we have been barking under." I say that if we can't drill for needed oil in "unspoiled" Alaska because of the Caribou, there's no rational for blowing a million or so to invade unspoiled Dismal Swamp and make the bears unhappy?

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