

In last week's TVN Opinion, Dr. Head implied that the political climate has taken a dramatic turn for the worse since Commissioners Larry Young and Alice Stevenson have taken office with accusations of closed government and disagreeable public discourse. I too believe in open government and a civil public discourse, and I would argue it is one of the main reasons Commissioners Young and Stevenson were elected.

I'm not as old an oldtimer as Dr. Head, but I have been around the block a few times in Teton County politics over the past 20+ years. Politics is a rough business especially when you are in the minority. Open government and civil public discourse has not been the prior administrations' strong suits, particularly to members of the public who did not agree with their political agendas. I've witnessed shouting matches between the Chairman of the P&Z, Bill Moulton, and members of the public (not an infrequent occurrence to those who choose to disagree with him). In one instance, Mr. Moulton publicly attacked a person in a letter to the editor claiming that other people, myself included, were "yapping like dogs". At another meeting, this time with the County Commissioners, after I provided public comment Commissioner Trupp's reaction was to call me a communist.

In 2003 and again in 2006 the previous BOCC administrations, which included Commissioner Trupp and then Clerk Nolan Boyle, were not just accused but caught in two illegal meetings. Commissioner Trupp later apologized, saying he didn't mean to violate open meeting law. Was it an honest mistake? Probably. Was it disappointing that after 6-7 years in their respective offices Mr. Trupp and Mr. Boyle didn't understand the code? Sure. Should Commissioners Stevenson and Young, after less than 90 days in office have a better understanding of the code than a nearly 10 year incumbent commissioner? Apparently. Are they held to a higher standard? Obviously.

As recent poll results showed, this community is concerned about growth and how it has been occurring, reinforcing why Commissioners Young and Stevenson were elected. Remember the election - all the ads, debates, and the opinion pieces? If you didn't know that Ms. Stevenson's and Mr. Young's agenda would include land use reform, you weren't paying attention. Surprised that they agree on some issues? That's what is known in political circles as a majority.

When individuals that were in the majority are no longer, their reaction is to attack on any grounds possible to reestablish control. Instead of taking this community hostage with recall elections, character assassinations and accusations that distract from the real issues facing the community, we need to work together to accomplish responsible growth.

Dr. Head and the TVA, from one "yapper" to another we're all in this together. The majority agrees that we need a better plan to manage growth. We all need to pull up a chair, get involved and support changes to get a better plan. The status quo planning efforts of the "olden days" are not working.

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