

L. Storm Comments, Gold Bar's August 17, 2004 Council Meeting

Good evening. I'm addressing you tonight not as the co-founder of G.R.I.T. , but as a private citizen. I'm here tonight for two reasons.

The first is that I have found myself In one of life's most weird little ironies: Being abused by a law I revere and honor -- The Public Information Act. The only purpose for the Act is to make government transparent enough so that taxpayers can ensure its accountability.

A Gold Bar councilman and several residents have used this Act -- along with the eager and generous compliance of the City of Sammamish -- supposedly to bring accountability to the City of Gold Bar. Unfortunately, the only problem in Gold Bar is that this elected council member is representing only his small and hapless band of acolytes, rather than all of its citizens.

I became embroiled in Gold Bar's affairs because I'm a friend of Colleen Hawkins. We are both veterans of Sultan's battles, and because of our shared interest in political endeavors, we became a two-person support network for each other and communicated mostly via email on private, personal or political issues.

The 350 emails supplied in May by Sammamish to Allyson Kemp-Sonsteng included some of my personal and private emails to Colleen. That City's actions were inappropriate and, I believe, will be found to be in violation of The Act, eventually. I intervened on Gold Bar's Temporary Restraining Order, so I could prevent the imminent and deliberate release of any further private emails. Sammamish had made clear their intention to release all of Colleen's and my communications, as well as Gold Bar's privileged communications, despite written objections by at least two lawyers -- among them, Phil Olbrechts' and myself.

We are awaiting your action on the Agreed Order and Stipulation tonight, and any subsequent related actions, before deciding whether to legally pursue Sammamish for their negligence. Sammamish's action in hastily crafting a "Midnight Hour" agreement at 5:00 PM the day before the court hearing, indicates potential culpability.

In yet another ripple effect of these events is Joan Amenn's stated intent in this chamber that she will post all of Colleen's emails, whether private or personal, on a website. My attorney has contacted her, Robert Amenn, Kemp Sonsteng and David Sonsteng regarding her promised action.

This has been a personal invasion of my privacy, just as surely as if the City of Sammamish, at the behest of certain members of this community, had bugged my husband's and my bedroom, or tapped my phone line. And I will take whatever steps are necessary to protect our rights.

Surely, it is not difficult to discern a private from a public communication. And in my 4 1/2 years working to make Sultan more accountable, I have never requested private information, nor used information at my disposal which was personal in nature.

The second reason I am addressing you tonight involves Gold Bar politics. After I read the recall document prepared by Joan Amenn, I was amazed that Councilman Amenn had been removed from council chambers during the meeting of April 20th. I wanted to hear for myself what occurred. Upon listening to the tape of that meeting, both my husband and I remained speechless, then sat stunned. What we heard was a man who apparently has little or no respect, either for the authority of law, or for the citizens he represents, despite his endless insistence that laws be followed to the letter.

I have transferred the audio of the council discussion of this portion of that meeting onto digital audio and I wish to post it on our website, along with a word-for-word transcription. Although I will ultimately do what I believe to be right, as I always do, I wish to seriously consider the stated opinions and feelings of this council, which I hope you'll share with me tonight.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.