



rRemarks Data for July 5th, 2022 Village Council Meeting

Agenda Section: Active

Agenda Item: B. ORD 2022-9497 An ordinance approving a Sales Tax Rebate Agreement between the Village of Downers Grove and Downers Grove Imports, Ltd.

Commenter: David Rose, Downers Grove

Comment: What is a resident to make of a VC that prides itself in its lack of financial and economic acumen and yet continues to enter into a sales tax rebate agreement on the grounds that “50% of something is better than 100% of nothing?”

VC and VM have never provided adequate explanation for how its rebate agreements function in practice. So claiming their use has been consistent for the past several years is hardly a claim upon which to take comfort.

The clawback provisions have no teeth, as the village learned to its regret a few years ago. And yet nothing about them has been altered since.

Nor does VC divulge sufficient information for residents to gauge the soundness of a specific agreement.

“50% of something is better than 100% of nothing” is a line also used in a scheme known as a protection racket. Would a resident find it acceptable in that situation?

The feeling of an asymmetry of power is the same — a business will not operate in a community unless the community bribes it to do so.

Is Pugi ‘investing’ in DG? From the information provided, that’s not at all clear.

If the only cap on the total rebate Pugi will receive is time (rebate collected annually over 15 years), one can readily infer that at the least the total rebate amount — if Pugi is successful — will defray most and possibly all of its upfront ‘investment.’ I.e., the sales tax rebate will pay off Pugi’s loan to build the facility, so its ‘investment’ is effectively zero.

The EDC may find such an arrangement acceptable since a core element of the way capitalism works is the privatization of gain (into capitalists' pockets) and the socialization of loss (out of everyone else's pockets).

In other words, Pugi is committed to DG if and only if DG pays for the cost of that commitment.

Not exactly a mutual commitment of equals.

Such is the nature of a "sales tax rebate agreement" as practiced by VC and others.

It's simply another aspect of IL's tax system, thanks to the state's heavy reliance on local property taxes, that feeds inequality and is tearing the state apart.

Agenda Section: Comments of a General Nature

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Comment: American citizens these days are dividing into opposing camps in which loyalty to one's side is demanded, regardless of the evidence. Questioning one's side's 'story' risks exclusion, shunning.

Notably, Dems are convinced they would have won the presidency in 2016 except for the interference of the Russians. And Repubs are convinced Dems stole the 2022 prez election. Yet in neither case do we have evidence either belief is true.

Americans purportedly believe in the peaceful transfer of power, regardless of how hinky the reason for the loss. Accept outcome, however nefarious, regardless.

Thus, Repubs presumably justify Nixon's treason in 1968 as payback for JFK in 1960. And justify Reagan's treason in 1980 as payback for Nixon's ouster in light of Watergate, and Ford's loss to Carter.

And Repubs likely see Bush 43 as payback for Clinton defeating Bush 41.

On that one, Dems still blame Nader and the Green Party for Al Gore losing in 2000, in spite of Dem's own failures to stop Repubs purging voters, Repubs disruption of

counting ballots in Fla, and the Supreme Court's dubious interference to hand Bush 43 the win.

And both Dems and Repubs cast the present conflict in Ukraine as an unwarranted Russian invasion, conveniently ignoring NATO's culpability.

That conflict is exposing multiple lies about reality not least of which begs the question how one sanctions a nation crucial to the world economy without hurting oneself and everyone?

So what is to be done when people's understanding of "reality" and reality clash? What do individuals aspiring to be leaders do if people refuse to face reality?

Having been lied to for decades, Americans are about to find out the hard way.

It's particularly easy for local pols to lie because few people bother to pay much attention, especially as a long-term effort.

Wonderful example:

In his message in the July 2022 Inside DG flyer, the Council Chair (CC) discussed the new facility the VC is intending to build.

Not surprisingly, the CC chose to emphasize the new features of the facility, including the naming of portions of the facility to honor two former residents, one of the village's founders Isrel Blackburn (a slave who gained freedom by fighting for the North in the civil war) and the village's first female council chair (aka mayor), Betty Cheever.

Do pols deserve credit for what happens during their time in office? For example, should one include in the list of Cheever's accomplishments DG going to Lake Michigan water or the creation of the downtown TIF used to pay for long-neglected infrastructure maintenance?

As I have noted previously, the TIF benefitted immensely and crucially from the loose financial conditions that pervaded the US during the life of the TIF. The blowback from that period of dubious self-delusion and euphoria has just begun to hit. It will not be pretty.

The CC outdoes himself however with this statement: “An entry plaza named in his (Blackburn’s) honor is a concrete and permanent statement that Civil Rights is our first calling as a Village government.”

DG may be able to claim abolitionists in its past but that theme has hardly been one dominating village life since. Indeed, one could readily argue DG’s growth in the post WWII period was fueled by white people fleeing the city of Chicago as it became home to blacks fleeing the segregated South for better economic opportunity in the industrial North. When industry fled elsewhere, urban-area blacks faced a much harsher reality that has yet to be rectified.

Were the white people who fled to DG racist? Let’s just say DG is not exactly known for its leading role in furthering civil rights, the CC’s fantasy to the contrary notwithstanding.

Examining VC’s actual operation, one sees the first calling of DG village government is to raise property values. “Trump plaza” is thus more like it, honoring the pursuit of illusory wealth through real estate speculation.

Rising real estate prices are an effective — and legal — way to keep black people of lesser means OUT of DG. AND in conjunction with the state’s reliance on local property taxes, rising RE prices perpetuates an inequality that undermines pursuit of civil rights by those citizens living outside those enclaves of wealth. In other words, the whole system is structured to keep black people figuratively and literally “in their place.”

Naming the plaza after Blackburn may offset somewhat the controversy about his burial place (unmentioned by the CC) but it’s about the least VC could do for civil rights.

Finally, the most ongoing and grievous fantastic lie CC repeats is the misleading use of the phrase “environmental sustainability” (ENVS) when discussing specific structural features of the new building and grounds.

Among the lies about reality that are going to bite all of us hard, the one about ENVS is almost certainly the biggest.

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Comment: PS.

I'll believe Americans care about their children as the future of society when the debate over abortion -- and population size more generally -- become part of the debate over the LACK of ENVIS of the American way of living.