



rRemarks Data for March 11, 2025 Village Council Meeting

Agenda Section & Item: Comments of a General Nature

Commenter: David Rose

Comment: Comment responding to Hose's State of the Village report and his remarks on the LA fires

How should one respond to the tragically ironic juxtaposition at VC's 14 Jan meeting of Mr H's performing his official duty as CC pro tem narrating the annual state of the village report and his member report at the end of the meeting? In the latter, he informed everyone his sister and her family were among those who lost their house in the wildfire that destroyed the Pacific Palisades section of Los Angeles.

I see the two as a tragically ironic juxtaposition because the state of the village report included a segment extolling the environmental sustainability efforts in DG. I have argued to little VC response those efforts are and, given indications of the big ESP soon to come, will continue to be woefully — dare one say pathetically — inadequate.

Because almost every American has a friend or family or personal connection to LA, to say nothing of the role and significance the region's residents play in the nation's culture, it's likely few Americans are not touched by the tragedy.

But given the state of the world and recent history, I can't help but wonder how many outside the US share the concern and sympathy.

For is it not the case that Pacific Palisades symbolizes the cavalier — indeed disdainfully arrogant — attitude Americans have about the impact their way of life has on everyone else and the political economic dangers we face going forward precisely because that way of life is ecologically unsustainable?

While I have seen discussion of the idea the ferocity of the fires was influenced by what I believe is more aptly called “climate chaos,” I have yet to see much discussion indicating Americans are now ready to change their way of living to the degree needed in order to reduce the intensity and frequency of such events in future.

Indeed, the new federal administration — Trump 2.0 — and its supporters are intent on preserving that way of life, come hell or high water, that is, ecological sustainability be damned. The attitude runs deep in the US and is for all practical purposes bipartisan.

Which is to say, the LA fires are a predictable consequence of the pattern that has prevailed in the US since its inception: a complete and total commitment to ever more economic growth and a complete and total failure to consider the ecological sustainability of that economic activity.

The chickens are coming home to roost.

Which is what the book Limits to Growth — the Club of Rome’s research published in the early 1970s — predicated would happen if humanity maintained its ‘business as usual’ course.

I have asked repeatedly: How bad will things have to get before we reassess and change course?

Mr H is the local embodiment of that commitment to growth. He believes wholeheartedly in the sale of public property for private development and in the McMansioning of private land in order to keep property taxes as low as possible to those who can afford to live in DG. In one notable instance he rebuffed Longfellow’s neighbors’ resistance to the transformation of their neighborhood by claiming “they’ll get used to it.”

If H understands anything about ecological sustainability, like others who have served and serve on VC or on VC’s ECC, he keeps it well hidden.

Given the history of the US impact on the rest of the world, particularly in recent decades, I also find it hard to believe much of the world sympathizes with those affected by the LA wildfires.

Their attitude toward Americans suffering likely mimics Americans’ attitude toward the suffering of say the Palestinians, to name one obvious example.

If only the Palestinians were an anomalous case.

Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Russia, Syria, Libya, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, Venezuela, Chile, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Mexico; and on and on. The list of the people and places the US has damaged — directly and/or indirectly — in pursuit of its so-called national interests in the post WWII period alone is virtually endless.

But when you're the exceptional nation, you disdainfully invoke H's claim: "they'll get used to it."

Thanks to Hollywood's myth-makers and reinforcers, Americans are encouraged to see themselves as "the rebellion" of Star Wars fame, when in reality we — or at least the top 30% of us (and those residing in the bottom 70% aspiring to the top) — are more the denizens of the Death Star.

The nation's capacity for arrogance, ignorance, and self-delusion seemingly knows no bounds.

Example: It fails to appreciate other nations might react just like we would when our security is threatened. How else to explain the obvious stupidity of our threatening Russia by supporting Ukraine's neo-nazis in light of the fact the Soviet Union lost tens of millions in fighting the Nazis in WWII?

Related example: Recent news reports commemorating the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp spoke of the liberation in the passive voice. Why? To avoid mentioning the Allied Forces' member doing the liberating was the Soviet Union!!

Example: These days, almost all Americans reject socialism and communism as an article of faith, completely ignorant of what either term means in theory or in practice.

Americans are taught to believe that American capitalism is God's chosen economic system, that the American version of democracy — now an oligarchy so self-evident even Joe Biden recognizes it — is God's chosen political system.

Related example: How wonderful and amazing is the America Dream these days?

No longer does one need to work hard to get ahead. Follow the example of the self-promoting showman/conman elected 47th prez: Issue a crypto-coin and hope that something worthless will attract billions of dollars from “investors.”

Why worry about living within the limits imposed by ecological sustainability when the supplies of hopium, snake oil, and the capacity to bask in reflected glory are clearly unlimited?

Robert Hunziker, a resident of LA who has written much about climate chaos and related topics, published on website counterpunch dot com on 17 Jan 2025 a piece that cited an email he received. Its sender opined the best we (humanity) can do at this juncture is to prepare for the disaster ahead.

Hunziker’s correspondent illustrated the idea by describing a 1989 plane crash in Iowa in which the pilot managed to crash land his commercial jetliner in a way that had almost no chance of success but was the only chance. Thanks to his leadership and ability, some of the passengers survived.

Will such leaders emerge in our situation? Will people follow them? Will we come to recognize the quandary into which we have put ourselves and make the sacrifices required so that some may survive?

Will we persist in our arrogance, ignorance, and self-delusion, and expect others to sacrifice because we are the exceptional ones who deserve to be saved?

How bad will it have to get before we re-assess and change course?

With the US (/world) population divided between those holding a non-zero-sum understanding and those holding a zero-sum understanding about the way life works, what course will the nation/humanity take?

Trump 2.0 and its supporters clearly reside in the zero-sum group, which goes far to explain its and their mean-spiritedness. Dominating all branches of federal government as they do now, they’re positioned to move the US and the world in a different direction.

The question on everyone's mind: What direction is that?

While some analysts worried Trump 2.0 might mean a 'more nationalist/isolationist' approach, early indications suggest 'more nationalist' in the case of the US means simply shifting US global hegemony to a more directly, openly confrontational approach. Why the change? Because extant international geopolitical arrangements and assumptions are no longer viable and sustainable. Why not? As intimated above, because the extant structures have reached their limit of ecological sustainability.

What this means in practice, as Biden Admin actions portended, is that US leaders are willing (as they have always been?) to hurt anyone, including US allies (notable recent example = Germany), in order to (try to) maintain US global domination.

Trump 2.0 merely extends that objective in more directly, openly imperialist fashion — ergo, talk of taking possession of Greenland, Panama Canal, Gaza, Canada!!! Asks Trump 2.0: "Who's going to stop US?"

If Trump winning in 2016 was a shock, Trump winning in 2024 is an affirmation Americans (on both sides of the political aisle) 1) have a great deal of difficulty separating reality from fantasy and 2) are not prepared to alter their way of living all that much. In a nutshell: they prefer to be lied to and to lie to themselves and each other.

Now led by a prez whose approach to decision-making is 'transactional,' that is, a person who lacks understanding of factors and ramifications beyond the immediate and narrow bounds of 'the deal' at hand, the US policy going forward is guided less by universal principles (principles the US purportedly exemplifies, that everyone else then aspires to, or so US leaders told themselves and postured to everyone else) and more by considerations of political and economic power whenever and wherever confrontations arise.

Which is to say: where the prior US-led global order born out of WWII was ostensibly intended to work to everyone's benefit to some degree, albeit to the benefit of the US most of all, the US now strives to maintain its global domination and way of living in the face of the widespread recognition the previous order failed and needs to be restructured if everyone — especially the populace outside the rich nations — is to benefit going forward.

The danger: the post-WWII US policy of NOT wanting anyone to rise high enough to challenge US dominance, that is, its capacity to expropriate and exploit, has reached its

limit. The US-led, 'rules-based' international order has been exposed as a zero-sum game.

So too in its domestic agenda; Trump 2.0 strives to realize long-sought conservative Repub dreams of shrinking government's restraint of the rich, thereby abdicating "to the market" (and to the adoring sycophants?) adjudication of everyone's life chances. The goal reflects a belief that the first Gilded Age was the best of times, at least for the superior beings inhabiting the upper classes, and will be replicated further if Trump 2.0 has anything to do with it.

Does Trump 2.0 believe that Gilded Age 1.0 had nothing to do with the horrible world war that followed? Or does it believe the two are in fact connected and that in the global conflict that will follow inevitably our Gilded Age 2.0 the US will again emerge victorious?

As I have observed repeatedly in prior comments, the challenge at every level of human society, both internationally and domestically, for those with a non-zero sum understanding is this:

When the way of living in the rich nations is NOT ecologically sustainable, can humanity reduce the level of consumption of the rich while raising the level of consumption of the poor while reducing the overall total level of resource consumption to a sustainable rate? And do so willingly and peacefully?

This is clearly NOT the goal of Trump 2.0?

Trump 2.0 (and its geopolitical kin) (implicitly) believe if resource limits mean humans' overall total level of resource consumption cannot help but be reduced, one deals with it by starting from the bottom ... killing off the "lesser beings" using the usual mechanisms of disease, famine, and murder.

Handy example (complete with religious connotations): Israel-Palestine.

Which then begs the question: Will Trump 2.0's un/predictability, in/competence, deceitfulness, vindictiveness, and/or the zealotry of its supporters generate a backlash that expands the ranks of those (inside and/or outside the US) seeking to move toward an ecologically sustainable way of living by following a non-zero-sum approach?

Asked differently, will Trump 2.0 cause increasingly more people to question the inevitability and legitimacy of US capitalism, the US version of democracy, and US domination of the international geopolitical economic order?

Or does Trump 2.0 hope/want/plan to provoke sufficient domestic and/or global disorder so that he/it can 'legitimately' invoke emergency powers that expand — irreversibly — the executive powers of the presidency, declare martial law and/or haul the nation into global war?

Since Dem leaders have shown over and over and over again they fear the left more than they fear the right, whence comes resistance inside the US to Trump 2.0?

What path do Americans wish to follow?

Given conservative Christians zero-sum understanding of eternal salvation, that is, as something attained by a only select few believers, their understanding of life in the here-and-now as zero-sum and their support for Trump 2.0 is hardly surprising. Will worsening crises shake or strengthen their beliefs?

Consider Pascal's wager: It is 'less risky' to believe that God exists, in that the consequences of being wrong in non-belief are so great. Yet many of the US Christian right boldly deny the reality of climate chaos and resource limits, accepting the risk of the significant consequences in being wrong. Irony they choose to ignore in the process: They presume their denial of their contribution to climate chaos and resource conflicts does not also carry the risk of eternal damnation as punishment for their hubris and arrogance.

Not surprisingly, members of VC behave as if none of these larger matters should distract from the local matters at hand in DG.

With Mr H's years on VC are coming to an end (unless he does a tully), I expect VC will adhere to its tradition and laud him for his many years of service.

However, I believe such praise is undeserved given H's commitment to ever more growth in DG and his ignorance of ecological sustainability and its implications, both of them underpinned by his desire to hold political power.

Then again: when the cultural preference in DG is to stay 10 to 20 years (or more) behind the curve, H's approach may be understood/excused as simply doing what all political 'leaders' do — leading from behind, doing nothing that jeopardized the chance of getting re-elected.

The pending question for DG and future VC candidates: Will DG staying 10 to 20 years behind the curve 'work' as things get worse?

What does staying 10 to 20 years behind worsening political economic and ecological chaos look and feel like?

Does it mean DG will be more immune to chaos? or less immune? More resilient in the face of chaos? Or less resilient?

What, if any, lessons will the residents of DG learn from the wildfires that hit LA?

Agenda Section & Item: Comments of a General Nature

Commenter: David Rose

Comment: Comment on 02 Mar VC meeting

It's now about a year since VC censored an e-remark I submitted predicting what last week's VC meeting confirms quite nicely, namely that VC has absolutely no idea what ecological sustainability (ECOS) means and thus fails to take it seriously as a primary goal for DG. To disguise that ignorance, VC hired a useful village idiot (UVI) to serve as sustainability coordinator and another one to serve as a sustainability consultant, who then give an imprimatur of expertise to VC's desire to mimic the timid environmental protection efforts adopted by municipalities across the US for the past couple of decades.

To what specifically do I refer about last week's and recent meetings?

To the juxtaposition of the environmental sustainability plan (ESP) report in contrast to the discussions of village signage and streetscapes, of village TIFs, and of the further proposed new construction, each adding to the already unsustainable resource load of DG's way of living.

This at a time when the US and the world are scrambling to figure out how to deal with the unpredictable actions and announcements of the new Trump 2.0 administration,

now merely weeks into its goal of wreaking of havoc and chaos. Albeit havoc and chaos somewhat different than the havoc and chaos wreaked in recent decades by Democrats and mainstream Republicans.

As I noted in my other e-remark for this meeting, the halcyon days in which the US was seen as leading the world guided by a non-zero-sum worldview have now given way to a recognition the US commitment to that worldview was a commitment of convenience at best and a commitment of deception in reality. Trump 2.0 does not alter but merely exposes the zero sum nature of the US worldview, an exposure necessitated by changing political economic and ecological realities.

Recent VC meeting discussions exemplify that worldview at the local level.

Most notable to me about the ESP report was its reference to the excessive ecological footprint of rich nations (expressed in hectares) juxtaposed against the ESP's timid sample recommendations.

To residents of DG and to members of VC, the footprint statistic is essentially meaningless, in that it has been known for decades but yielded virtually nothing in the way of mitigating response.

I have pointed out this mismatch previously.

To repeat ...

Do a simple calculation: Divide the land area bounded by DG by the ecologic footprint number to determine the number of people theoretically sustainable within that space.

The result is easily ten times LESS than the population of DG; yet no one on VC or ECC or any of the village's "environmentally concerned" residents (such as Greener Grove folks) are prepared to discuss the ramifications of this result.

While hectares are a meaningless eco metric to residents, I pointed out that EAV, that is, property values — a metric to which VC and residents are very attentive — is an apt proxy metric of the village's LACK of ECOS. The greater the EAV, the less ecologically sustainable the way of living connected to the EAV.

Does the proposed ESP dare touch the third-rail subjects of VC's continued pursuit of economic growth or of increasing DG's population as they affect DG's already unsustainable rate of resource consumption? Of course not.

Instead you get the half-assed, woefully inadequate ideas UVI, after consultation with the ECC (self-admitted dabblers), put forward that so impressed VC on the one hand and which VC blissfully ignored in its discussions of its various efforts to increase growth on the other.

Comm Gilm asked UVI how the Greenest Region Compact (GRC) influenced formulation of the ESP? The correct answer, which UVI avoided: not in the way it should have.

Specifically, I noted in another prior comment to VC that GRC members have committed to reducing CO2 emissions by 50% from 2005 levels by 2030.

So where in the report do we see discussions of how VC and DG are going to shoot for and achieve that goal?

Do you really think DG is going to hit the target by following the kind of recommendations the ESP report identified? Really?

"Green construction?" Please.

What metric does the ESP propose VC use to assess the ECOS impact of future Longfellow fiascos, teardowns, or multi-story high-rises?

Unless and until the ESP articulates explicitly and directly a goal of and plan for reducing the total (direct and indirect) energy consumption of the village's way of living to a sustainable level, the ESP will be a charade.

Show me the path, show me the timeframe, show me the data.

Of course, given DG's cultural preference to stay 10 to 20 (or more) years behind the curve, don't expect VC or DG to undertake that one any time soon ... since to my knowledge NO municipality in the nation is striving to reduce total energy consumption.

The ESP as presently proposed does nothing more than get residents to do something, on the presumption doing something is better than doing nothing. In other words, it's a community involvement program, nothing more. Conscience laundering for those who are "environmentally concerned." And lest the point be missed, getting more residents to 'do something' to 'protect the local DG environment' is hardly a plan in the usual sense of the word.

As I predicted in the remark VC censored, VC hired the sustainability equivalent of the punchline to the old accounting joke: how much is 2+2? 'Right' answer: How much do you want it to be?

If only the goal of ECOS could be fudged so easily.

A maxim of political economy states: In an economy laden with so much debt they cannot be repaid, debts will not be repaid.

The ecological equivalent is even more demanding: In an economy in which the way of living is not ECOS, the way of living will not be sustained.

We are about to learn the hard way what these mean.

For the past many years I have done what I could to challenge VC to take its goal seriously.

VC refuses to budge, refuses to engage.

And sadly, I see little indication any of the individuals running for VC in the upcoming election are going to help the next VC do any better. After all, residents put Tully back on VC, in spite of his ongoing ECOS ignorance.

On what basis then can one be hopeful in the face of such fervent dedication to willful ignorance, incurious stupidity, and disdainful deceitfulness ?

Agenda Section & Item: Comments of a General Nature

Commenter: Lisa Forst

Comment: I am writing to express my concern about an event held at the Betty Cheever Council Chambers on February 21, 2025, which was misrepresented to village officials as a “town hall” by Congressman Sean Casten and his staff. A town hall is an open forum for all constituents to engage with their elected officials.

Despite being promoted to the Village as an open public forum, it was an invite-only event (not posted and confirmed via phone call), and social media posts afterward revealed it was used to present misinformation and biased falsehoods to the public about republicans and the Trump administration. Link:

<https://x.com/repcasten/status/1893071451843891420?s=46>

As a resident of Downers Grove, I am troubled by this misuse of our community’s civic center and the apparent lack of oversight that allowed it to happen.

Our civic center is a taxpayer-funded space meant to serve all residents, not to be reserved for exclusive gatherings or partisan stunts. The congressman's social media bragging about the event only deepened the insult, turning a public resource into a stage for political point-scoring while excluding villagers like me who might have attended a genuine town hall.

I am disappointed that village officials permitted this under false pretenses, whether knowingly or due to insufficient verification. I respectfully request that you investigate how this misrepresentation occurred and take steps to ensure it doesn’t happen again—such as requiring clear documentation of an event’s purpose and accessibility before approving its use of public facilities and creating clear guidelines for use of the facility.

Additionally, I urge you to publicly address this incident and consider demanding an apology or clarification from Congressman Casten on behalf of the community.

We deserve transparency and accountability from both our elected officials and those who manage our village resources.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to learning how the village will safeguard our civic spaces moving forward.