



## **rRemarks Data for December 13th, 2022 Village Council Meeting**

**Agenda Section:** Comments of a General Nature

**Agenda Item:** Comments of a General Nature

**Commenter:** David Rose

**Comment:** Comment on Political Truthiness

I remarked in an electronic comment I submitted for the 01 Nov meeting that one of the key problems in our nation's political discourse these days is that language, the use of words, has lost almost all grounding in shared social meaning.

Absent this mooring, and with constant bombardment of framing and marketing for purposes not of communication and dialogue but tribal formation as a basis for conquest and victory, the theatre that is usually the politics of governing has become so pervasively deceptive and corrupt the notion of 'truth' has given way to 'truthiness.'

At its most extreme, this becomes the Trump notion of truth. According to journalist Maggie Haberman's reporting on our esteemed former Prez, Trump's notion of truth is whatever he says at a particular moment, independent of what he has said at any other moment, that what he chooses to believe is true becomes truth, at least for the moment. Truth becomes a psycho-social Schrodinger's cat projection: something becomes true when one says it's true at least for that moment.

I contend we live in an age of let's call it "Trumpian truth."

Simple example: We have seen in meetings more than one person stand up and say "I am not racist," or "The US is not racist." Is such a statement true? According to the person voicing it, yes, because one declares it to be so, no further evidence is required.

The last time I made a comment to VC in person, I criticized its autocratic way of operating. Not surprisingly, the chair-in-waiting (CIW) couldn't help himself and dismissed everything I said on grounds I was misusing the word.

I had to laugh at the arrogance, since this is the same person who during the discussion of license plate readers declared he accepts as “data” a broad statement (based on staff inquiries) that the devices help provide leads to the police. The staff’s statement provided no further information about the municipal police departments making such claims nor any precise description of what “help provide leads” means in practice, i.e., in terms of quantity or quality of information. A Trumpian truth, in other words. And since no one on VC bothered to contend otherwise, one is left with the obvious inference they agree with the CIW’s notion of what constitutes ‘data’.

I’ve witnessed VC utter many Trumpian truths over the years.

Such as

VC is dedicated to protecting trees except when it isn’t, as we saw with the Longfellow (Lngf) fiasco.

VC follows village ordinances and its comprehensive plan except when it doesn’t. Again as we saw with Lngf.

VC follows its self-declared procedures on public comments except when it doesn’t:

Everyone has chance to speak. But not longer than 5 minutes regardless of the complexity of the subject or the lack of other speakers OR the brevity of the meeting’s agenda.

With persons making public comment asked not to repeat what has already been said.

And displays of agreement, such as applause, are purportedly not allowed, except when they are, following VC’s lead.

Except these guidelines go out the window whenever a lot of angry people show up and members of VC have to earn their annual \$5000 honorarium, or \$10k in the case of the council chair (CC), and hear people make the same statements about a particular matter of interest — anger — to them.

Such as happened when local far right conservatives showed up to complain about the library’s planned drag queen bingo event. For which DG garnered a fair bit of local TV news attention, thanks to media’s predisposition to sensationalism.

That far right individuals felt compelled to show up at the library board meeting and VC meeting AFTER the event was cancelled suggests more their desire to publicize themselves than to make sure the library didn't reschedule the event.

I wondered however why they didn't propose the library offer counter programming, such as a session of conversation therapy bingo?

Is the far right's concern legitimate? Consider this:

The Catholic Church, Southern Baptist Convention, Boy Scouts, sports teams and their players, coaches, administrators, owners, and medical staff, the police, and the military. All are entities held in high esteem by conservatives. All are known to have had individuals in positions of authority take advantage sexually of the less powerful. AND in each entity's case such abuse of power was tolerated and covered up for years and sometimes decades.

To my knowledge none of those instances of sexual abuse — NONE — were linked to drag queens.

So we appear to have another example of Trumpian truth circulating amongst at least some members of the public, who use it primarily for their own political purposes.

"We're listening" is the default VC refrain on any subject of widespread public comment. But these are empty words usually, a response that fails to reflect actual listening since VC is committed to avoiding dialogue in its meetings. The void is exacerbated further because VC makes no effort to publish the content of the other forms of communication it purportedly welcomes between itself and members of the public.

Lacking that information and lacking a forum in which resident dialogue and sharing of knowledge actually occurs, residents have no means by which to discuss issues of import to the village as a whole. Which means issues likely either wither or fester, neither of which is healthy for genuinely democratic decision-making.

Another Trumpian truth: VC is a partner of school district DG58 except when it's not.

Both VC and 58 refuse to admit they are playing financial catchup for past under-collection of revenue sufficient to meet both immediate and longer term needs. Both bodies are in early stages trying to match planning with tax collections in order to avoid the past pattern of deferring maintenance until it can no longer be avoided.

Neither body however has been adequately forthcoming about its future financial obligations.

58 succeeded in getting its bond referendum passed, even though it failed to provide substantive information allowing residents to gauge how they arrived at the numbers they used to assure the 70% of residents who do NOT have children in the district that the bond amount is appropriate and bearable. Nor has VC been particularly forthcoming about the tax implications of its long term obligations, notably about funding pensions.

Coming at a time of such great uncertainty and upheaval in the world, both 58 and VC ask residents for a leap of faith and trust them about their funding requests. Yet neither is particularly deserving of trust and respect in light of their handling of the Lngf fiasco and their subsequent financial maneuverings with respect to the new village hall facility. 58's rent prepayment may technically be an independent decision but it smells of a quid pro quo.

When past tax collections are insufficient, one must play catchup to avoid disaster. If we ignore the option of getting money directly from outside sources (not easily done in light of recent federal level largesse handed out to local governments across the country), two paths are available to VC: Raise taxes on existing taxpayers or bring in more and richer taxpayers, including commercial enterprises.

VC's pattern these past decades has been to bring in more and richer taxpayers, even if it means hurting individual neighborhoods, as we saw with the Lngf fiasco, the fiasco of the traffic burden on Forest Av, and VC's recent decision to allow a multi-story building on Main St north of the tracks, adversely affecting its Highland Av neighbors. All in the name of purportedly doing so for the good of the village as a whole.

How is that amorphous notion defined? Apparently by the objective of keeping the share of VC revenue collected via residential property tax at 30% of the total revenue VC collects. Which, by extrapolation, amounts to village gentrification one teardown at a time, in an effort not to tick off too many people at the same time.

When you're playing catch-up, there's little money to take on anything new, other than relatively inexpensive and uncontroversial projects like a social worker to make social services referrals. I commented about the Trumpian truth of that endeavor in my electronic remark to the 15 Nov meeting.

Public officials in places like DG regularly complain about unfunded mandates handed down by the state. But as long as the state perpetuates the inequity and inadequacy

built into its system of relying on property taxes to fund public services at the local level, the state will continue to rip itself apart. Illinoisans failed to pass a graduated income tax, which left in place the regressive fixed rate system at the state level, and in turn kept in place the inequity of the de facto graduated income tax known as the residential property tax at the local level. Residents of DG and other property rich towns are more than happy to see that system perpetuated. Nor do they complain about the state's willingness NOT to tax retirement income, which leaves the state's more well-to-do retirees better able to pay the property taxes collected by property rich towns.

To the average citizen, both rich and poor, the exploitation of the arrangement remains mostly hidden and thereby unaddressed.

Of course, conservatives and defenders of such exploitation argue what DG's VC does in its pursuit of growth is something any town can do.

But that claim a) presumes exploitation of the exploited is deserved and unavoidable ("exploit or be exploited") and b) ignores the core issue of environmental sustainability (ENVS).

ENVS properly defined refers to a way and standard of living that uses resources at a sustainable rate.

ENVS is purportedly a primary goal of VC, but as I have pointed out at length over the years such a claim is almost certainly VC's most enduring Trumpian truth.

For I have asked VC repeatedly and have yet to hear anything but crickets in response:

Is capitalism compatible with ENVS?

Is relentless pursuit of economic growth?

Is democracy?

Is the way of living in DG compatible with ENVS?

If you can't answer these questions in the affirmative, then relentless pursuit of localized economic growth is in fact making matters worse.

In like fashion, VC voices Trumpian truth about its commitment to ENVS whenever it claims to residents the Environmental Concerns Commission (ECC) is dormant for any

reason other than i) VC wants it to be dormant, ii) VC's business model requires it be dormant, and iii) VC's truncated notion of ENVIS ("buy 'green products' whenever possible") means VC defines ECC's role as more symbolic than functional, i.e., "window dressing/ornamentation."

Because IL does not allow residents to use a recall election to end such incompetence, we can only hope current occupants of 58's board and this VC and their staffs don't do any more damage than they've already done before they're tossed from office.

Do the residents of DG want to see an end to truthiness and a restoration of truth in the operation of government in DG?

We'll find out with next year's election.

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**Comment:** More on the subject of pursuing truth in these times.

Americans are currently wrestling with the subjects of free speech, media presentation of ideas, and social media's role in the process.

I don't use social media myself but for those of you who do, I hope you find the following summary of the debate over Twitter (which I found on the internet) instructive:

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The Mainstream Narrative

– As a worldwide 'public square,' Twitter should be heavily regulated for misinformation and spamming by hostile interests. Twitter bears a responsibility to take action against disinformation and hate. Content moderation on platforms like Twitter is absolutely necessary to safeguard our democracy. As a private company Twitter is under no legal obligation to protect free speech and everything Twitter has done is within the law. Twitter and other social media platforms were instrumental in combating disinformation about Covid 19, climate change, election integrity and the war in Ukraine.

– Elon Musk is an arrogant, toxic person. He doesn't really care about free speech. His goals in purchasing Twitter are political. His takeover of Twitter is the most terrifying

development in recent history. His purchase of Twitter will destroy it by driving away advertisers and providing a platform for Neo-Nazis and other hate-speechers. Under Musk, Twitter is a scammer's paradise. Elon Musk decimated the staff of Twitter (breaking Federal labor laws) while restoring accounts that spread disinformation. Control of Twitter involves national security risks and Musk's takeover should be investigated by the US Government.

– The so-called “Twitter Files” are a feast for conspiracy theorists and have re-enlivened the influence of entities like QAnon. Journalists like Matt Taibbi writing about the Twitter Files are selling their souls to do PR work for the richest man in the world. The Twitter Files entries are sloppy, anecdotal and devoid of context. They are a nothing event about nothing event. The hysteria surrounding the Twitter Files is being used by Republicans for political gain.

– The Hunter Biden laptop story was difficult and the truth was not known early and so caution was justified. There is no evidence in the Twitter Files that the government was involved in the suppression of the Hunter Biden Laptop story. There is nothing on Hunter Biden's laptop that actually implicates Joe Biden. James Baker took the careful approach and urged Twitter to weigh both sides of the Hunter Biden Laptop story before proceeding.

– Hate speech has dramatically increased since Musk took over Twitter and these hateful tweets will lead to violence against the already marginalized. Right wing accounts such as those of Donald Trump, Project Veritas and the Babylon Bee should continue to be banned.

### The Counter Narrative

– Twitter management was openly against free speech and used techniques such as “Visibility Filtering” to limit the reach of some posts. Twitter had secret blacklist files to limit the distribution of certain tweets specifically targeting right wing users. Twitter and other social media platforms have been instrumental in distributing disinformation and hiding the truth about Covid 19, climate change, election integrity and the war in Ukraine. Twitter censorship was used by the Democrats for political gain

– Elon Musk is a hero. He bought Twitter to restore free speech. Twitter, pre-Musk, was a major accomplice and enabler in selling-out America's future. Twitter was bloated with excess and left wing employees.

– The Twitter Files show that the DNC and FBI were directly involved in suppressing free speech and prove that the 2020 elections were not free and fair. Twitter was clearly involved in election interference. The government interactions with Twitter were similar to Nazi propaganda methods. Twitter employees and their government contacts should be made to answer for their actions before congress. So-called journalists criticizing Matt Taibbi for his work on the Twitter Files are embarrassing in their uniformity and mindless support of a corrupt system.

– The files on Hunter Biden’s laptop prove that Joe Biden used his office to make money and Twitter’s suppression of the laptop story was done to help get Joe Biden elected. It is a bigger scandal than Watergate. James Baker was involved in RussiaGate at the FBI and the Hunter Biden Laptop suppression at Twitter. Baker deleted some of the content that should have been in the Twitter Files.

– The claims that hate speech has increased on Twitter since Musk’s takeover are utterly false. Hate speech is not tolerated on Twitter. Twitter largely ignored child trafficking issues until Musk took over. Lifting the ban on Donald Trump, Project Veritas and the Babylon Bee on Twitter are victories for free speech.

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What ideas and possibilities do you not allow yourself to think about?

What if you're wrong?