

## **The Surprise Whistle**

### **By Rhona Baron**

At the Mayoral Forum on July 10, one hundred twenty sweltering citizens seemed startled at times as the drama unfolded over an hour and a half of back and forth between the moderator and candidates. The community was left wondering. What are Rich Brinkman's ties to Projekt Bayern? Is Carl Florea correct that WA State now mandates more residential density in Leavenworth? And what about this land ownership "swap" being considered by the council and mayor to exchange the defunct car wash at the east end of town owned by Thomas Lin with land at the pool/Lion's Club Park site? Today, after much digging and fact finding, we offer the dirt (or lack thereof).

First to statements made concerning candidate Rich Brinkman's involvement with Projekt Bayern (PB), the organization that formerly presented Leavenworth's Oktoberfest. Most folks know that in the midst of controversies and a lawsuit, Projekt Bayern, is no longer tapping our kegs. The majority of citizens seem to prefer the more low key and family oriented Oktoberfest, now overseen by the Leavenworth Chamber. So when a mayoral candidate is characterized as having close ties to PB, heads turn.

We contacted Rich Brinkman to get his take on the allegations. "I have never been a member of Projekt Bayern and don't go to their meetings," said Brinkman. Regarding Brinkman's history with PB he said, "In the years since I was a city administrator, when first asked to do so, I've given the official welcome at Oktoberfest." Brinkman went on to say that he was proud of much of what Projekt Bayern has contributed to Leavenworth, reiterating that he didn't think PB had been treated fairly.

Regarding campaign contributions, Brinkman told us that he has received various donations. However, checking the public record of the approximately \$1,300 Brinkman has received to date, \$500 came in from Projekt Bayern and \$500 from the Taffy Shop co-owned by Cary Sanger, Projekt Bayern's president. Still, Brinkman insists, "I am in no way beholden to a group, business or organization that donates to my campaign."

Brinkman also denies the allegation made by mayoral candidate Becki Subido that appeared in the Wenatchee World on June 23, namely that he "has always had close ties" to Projekt Bayern and that the group is "driving his campaign." According to Brinkman, "That is completely false! My goal is to serve Leavenworth as a whole; downtown and neighborhoods."

We reached out to Subido and she responded: "I stand by my statements made at the Mayoral Forum because I value the community knowing the truth."

At the forum, incumbent Carl Florea was adamant that his push for 'housing diversity' and the results we have begun experiencing as a community, are connected to state law and the Growth Management Act. "Density, accessory dwelling units and infilling are all things Leavenworth has to do. It's mandated," Florea said. "Look it up yourself."

We did. As a result, The Whistle advises you to set aside HB 1110 once and for all. It is aimed at cities of over 25,000. Instead turn your attention to HB 1337, which Gov. Inslee recently signed into law. Florea stated in an email following the forum: "My reference was to HB 1337, which requires cities at their next full update of their comprehensive plan allow a second ADU in all single family zones."

This is correct. Within six months of updating any town's comprehensive plan, every city within an UGA will be required to develop regulations that permit 2 ADUs on existing residential properties. Those structures could appear as a house with a "duplex" consisting of two units; three separate units; or what would be called a "threplex." All will be allowed within single family zoning! In the new law, there are provisions for minimum size and heights, optional restriction on short term rental, and a requirement that living units be allowed to be separately sold. In other words, three separate home owners on a 30 x 100 square foot lot will be possible.

HB 1337 does not REQUIRE density and infill in single family residential zones. But it does allow the permitting of ADU's and manages the adoption of permissive regulations. Therefore, as we loop back to the original question: is Leavenworth mandated to provide density, I think it's fair to blow the whistle, answering with a soft "no." And certainly not now as we may be years from updating our comprehensive plan! However, the mayor is correct that this bill is indeed coming to a neighborhood near you. Make that your neighborhood. In the interim, the community could be planning for the loss of vegetation, street character and other changes. It is unsuccessful, packed-in development, unfettered from infrastructure and care for green space that we oppose.

Instead, this mayor's approach and his direction with his planning commission is to use HB 1337 as the "outside parameter." Florea continued, "it can be done sooner." And indeed, pieces of the bill are being considered at City Hall as code adoptions for Leavenworth as we speak, even though there is currently no mandate.

With a moment left to wrap this Whistle and address the land swap regarding the pool and proposed aquatic center to be built by Thomas Lin, we give the Whistle to Sharon Waters. Waters is the doughty council person who's lived here for decades, teaches water aerobics and can be the lone voice of community and common sense in council chambers. At the council study session on July 11 she summed it up. "People wanted an indoor pool, not the Taj Mahal."

Living here and watching the pool vision take shape over the years, I'd have to agree. But to capture just how loopy it can be in session, we'll close with quotes from council person Marco Aurilio with parentheses courtesy of The Whistle: "An aquatic center would increase tourism." (debatable and not exactly needed) "Kids want a surf wave" (when blessed to grow up beside local rivers and lakes?). "Kids should be part of the survey, then they can bug their parents to vote for it" ('nuff said).

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