

June 21, 2022

Dear Clayton City Council:

There seems to be some confusion about the reception the grassroots (parcel tax and landscaping) flyer has received throughout the community, including our efforts to organize and inform the Clayton residents of your mismanagement.

First, let me explain; Bill Walcutt and I paid for the flyers. We had multiple people contribute to the flyer content, and many (23 individuals) helped distribute all 4500 of them to the Clayton community, with a few distributed by local Clayton business owners to their customers.

The main reason for the flyer is that you are not doing your job, and some of you are trying to mislead the public. There is no leadership, and the lack of experience is evident to everyone watching.

With C.W. Wolfe at the helm last year, he accomplished nothing but proclamation after proclamation. At the mayors' conference, his comment about "sitting at the big boy's table" was chauvinistic and insulting to the women in attendance and was an embarrassment to the City of Clayton. His skill and knowledge of running a council meeting were a total disgrace. What happened to the promise of healing the divide and bringing the town back together? We're still waiting! Your first major "mistake" was passing up Jeff Wan as our mayor.

Next up, Peter Cloven, wasting \$30,000 of taxpayer money to get the result we already knew. Peter got it wrong. And continues to get it wrong with his thought process. The \$30,000 is taxpayer money. It doesn't matter if the money comes from the federal, state, or local government; it's still taxpayer money. Your second major "mistake" was passing up Jeff Wan again as our mayor.

Who in their right mind would think the citizens of Clayton would approve a new parcel tax measure with inflation at an all-time high. Any reasonable person would've explored Plan B first. Many of the Clayton residents we've talked with have expressed dissatisfaction that cuts to our budget were not looked at first. How about a 5% pay cut across the board, including the City Council and Planning Commission, until we identify other areas we can cut and/or create additional revenue. What about renting out the space downstairs at city hall, and how about charging a rental fee to nonprofit groups when they use our downtown for special events.

But what did you do? You went directly to the residents for a \$400.00 per year parcel tax with a bogus and skewed telephone survey. Your approach was appalling, misleading, and unacceptable, especially when you lied about our budget deficit (your wish list) and got caught.

If you want to learn what real outreach is, maybe you should follow our lead and try to involve all the citizens of Clayton rather than just a few. The poor example of your outreach was the 44 people you got to respond to the door hanger "Build a City Game" flyer as it related to our housing element. In reality, the solution is simple, stop pitting neighborhoods against neighborhoods and put the housing element down by Clayton Station, where the transportation hub and jobs are located.

You have kicked the can down the road for way too long with total disregard for essential matters that our city should be dealing with, i.e., housing, landscaping, and getting City Hall in order.

It's hard to navigate these challenging issues when our City Manager is never in the office. Someone needs to be at City Hall and provide leadership. And that leadership needs to start with the City Council by giving the City Manager direction. Once again, what happened to the promise of healing the divide and bringing the city back together? C.W. Wolfe and Peter Cloven, we're still waiting!

Here is an update on the (parcel tax and landscaping) flyer response. So far, we have received 117 email responses. All have been very supportive and positive, except for one that stated they did not agree with all comments in the flyer. Reports from the volunteers passing out the flyers have been very positive. They have reported the citizens they met thanked them for their efforts and the information.

As you may know, Bill Walcutt and I have lived here for over 37 years and have never seen it this bad. The city is in a world of hurt and needs leadership badly. In addition, the community park, the downtown park, the lack of landscape maintenance all over town, the downed street light poles and directory signs, and stop signs that you have not replaced for months/years are unacceptable and embarrassing. We need competent leadership to turn this around. And we need it now.

The new sod at the Downtown Park, which was fenced off for months, is dying or dead. The City Manager said a broken water pipe caused it, and the cost to replant the sod will be covered from the special assessment for The Grove--our tax money. So, let's just let it die and then fix the water pipe and have the taxpayers pay for new sod. Great plan. Did anyone ever think about watering the lawn by hand?

Why do we not let kids use The Grove Park's splash pond? The kids throughout the community have been locked up for over two years because of Covid-19. Isn't it time we let them enjoy their summer vacation and the park? Their mental health and well-being should be a top priority. And, when are you going to water the plants throughout the town? Maybe the \$30,000 tax pay money Peter Cloven wasted could have been used to keep our youth happy and our plants alive.

The water appears to be off in many parts of the town. Why? The water district only requires a 15% reduction in our water usage. To my knowledge, no regulations restrict us from turning on the water at the splash pond, let alone the drinking fountains in the Grove Park, along with watering a few plants. According to Peter Cloven, some of that ARP money (\$1,600,000) we got for "free" could be used to do the right thing until we solve many of our problems. Once again, leadership is needed.

It doesn't have to be this way. Please remember it's not us against you or you against us. But if you continue going down the same road, we will have no other choice but continue with our agenda and engage the community and make them aware of your mismanagement and lack of leadership.

Please feel free to contact us at your convenience, as we would be more than willing to sit down with any of you and explore how we can get on the same page and move the town we all love forward.

Sincerely,

Gary Hood
Bill Walcutt

P.S. To get the pulse of your constituents, I have enclosed 12 emails from the 117 emails we received at claytonwatch94517@gmail.com from handing out the flyers. We have redacted their names for privacy. If you want to see more, I would be happy to share them with you.

Emails from the Clayton Community

Fri, May 20, 11:18 AM

to ClaytonWatch94517

To Whom It May Concern,

I am a long-time resident of Clayton since July 1996 and live in the Regency Meadows neighborhood.

I read the 2-page flyer that was left on my doorstep on 5/23/2022; one side titled, "A Town Divided" and the other side titled, "Weeds Gone Wild!" Several cited claims were made in both articles, but there were no actionable items to the many claims cited. **What is your ask of Clayton residents?**

I have known Peter Cloven since 2018. Peter is about Peter and was an ass-wipe when I met him and remains an ass-wipe today in his role as Mayor of the City of Clayton. I have no insight nor have I interacted in any way directly with Ms. Schwartz, Ms. Tillman, or Mr. Wolfe. If there is interest to establish a united front in the Clayton community seeking Peter Cloven's resignation as Mayor of Clayton, I would support and volunteer my time with this effort since Peter's term in office doesn't expire until 11/2024. It is my position that Peter's views on what is best for the City of Clayton aren't aligned with this Community's views. With that said, I don't know if Ms. Tillman, today's Vice Mayor, would be the worse of two evils as Mayor in the event Peter resigned as Mayor of Clayton.

I agree with the claim that the City's landscaping needs immediate attention. Parties that drive into the City's limits accessing from Clayton Road and Oakhurst Drive are under impressed and I find it personally embarrassing as a long-time resident of Clayton. The matter of the Landscape Maintenance District fund being potentially co-mingled with the General Fund is distressing and should be addressed ASAP. How can I help?

I believe the claim of "...44% of Clayton residents do not trust our elected officials" is understated since I did not participate in any survey related to City of Clayton elected officials and I have firsthand knowledge that many of my personal friends who are Clayton residents also did not participate in any recent survey in connection with questions related to trust of the City's elected officials.

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Fri, May 20, 1:18 PM

to ClaytonWatch94517

Bill and Gary,

I agree with your assessment of the city. The landscaping and overall condition of Clayton is a disgrace. Both the city manager and assistant city manager should resign, and new council members should run for election. It is time for a change.

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Fri, May 20, 9:18 PM

to ClaytonWatch94517

Bill and Gary

As a triathlete, I spend a lot of time training—which includes over a dozen hours running and biking each month—and what I see while I am out has truly reached the level of being disgusting.

In addition to chest-high weeds on the medians, trails and next to sidewalks, there is also trash and graffiti popping up on a regular basis and the roads are in terrible condition.

In that regard, the bike lanes are in such bad shape (due to a combination of poor road surface and debris) that there are parts that are unsafe to ride—which has forced me (and presumably others) out into traffic. The city will really learn its lesson when a cyclist gets hurt or injured due to those conditions (and, as a defense attorney, I know a thing or two about the subject).

For what it's worth, I did some math and, putting aside what they already have in the landscaping budget, for the \$30K spent on that ridiculous survey, they could pay someone \$15/hr on a full time basis for nearly a year just to pull weeds.

Their inefficiency and incompetence really is remarkable.

Anyway, as someone who has not been shy about voicing my displeasure in the past, I mainly just wanted to say that appreciate your guys' efforts.

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Sat, May 21, 9:50 PM

Gary and Bill,

I just received the door flyer and agree with the points mentioned. I currently live in the Peacock Creek neighborhood of Clayton and have lived in Clayton for 25 years. I have noticed an abundance of weeds growing in all of the sidewalk areas and curb seams throughout Clayton. Our Peacock Creek entrance sign was so overgrown with weeds that I went and pulled out all of the weeds myself last week.

As stated in the flyer, our city council seems to be eager to throw our tax dollars at costly and wasteful surveys, consultants and studies. I am totally against these expenditures. Furthermore, I have never been asked to provide my vote on any of these surveys, making me wonder how legitimate they are.

Another issue I am also strongly against is the proposed renaming of Kirker Pass because the name Kirker was supposedly a bad individual (not proven). I realize that this is more of a county issue than a Clayton issue, but I have expressed my opinion in an email to county supervisor, Karen Mitchoff. She stated that county Measure X (\$200 million) will cover the renaming expenses. When we voted on Measure X, it was stated to be a health/safety-related measure and makes no mention of street renaming. Just another example of diverted/wasteful spending by our local politicians.

Getting back to Clayton-specific issues, I strongly agree that Clayton is not being managed correctly and would like to help in any way.

Thanks, ██████████

Sun, May 22, 7:56 PM

Bill and Gary,

I just received the door flyer and agree with the points mentioned. I currently live in the Peacock Creek neighborhood of Clayton and have lived in Clayton for 25 years. I have noticed an abundance of weeds growing in all of the sidewalk areas and curb seams throughout Clayton. Our Peacock Creek entrance sign was so overgrown with weeds that I went and pulled out all of the weeds myself last week.

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to ClaytonWatch94517

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Best regards,

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Tue, May 24, 8:55 AM

Bill and Gary,

Hello,

Thank your support and interest in our community. As a long-term Clayton Resident and Business owner, I have noticed many changes in our community. I would argue that we should add to the list: litter, noise, speeding as "Quality of Life" issues that that should be given the highest priority by our government, including the Clayton Police Department. Our small town may be "growing up," but these are basic quality of life issues that require our immediate attention. As Wilson and Kelly demonstrated in their 1982 paper,

Broken Windows Theory, there is a tangible link between disorder in the neighborhood and incivility and crime. We should avoid mistakes of the "big cities" and address our quality of life crimes now.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Tue, May 24, 11:55 AM

to Claytonwatch94517@gmail.com

I was so happy to receive your green letter on my doorstep. I could not agree more with how rundown with weeds our city has become!!! I called the landscaping dept one week before Easter complaining how over run with weeds our center median is at the corner of Regency and Marsh Creek! I left a msg and it took a week for someone to reply. When they did they promised me they would take care of the weeds the following week. STILL WAITING!!! I'm going to have to call again. Soooo disappointing!!!

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

Wed, May 25, 9:01 PM

to Claytonwatch94517@gmail.com

Thank you so much for your recent newsletter. I have had my suspicions about this latest council for some time now. It is common knowledge that the certain council person has a major racial chip on her shoulder. I have been a Clayton resident for almost 30 years and I have always found our Police Department to be some of the most courteous, respectful and helpful Officers anyway. If this certain council person doesn't like it here, I would say to her that Concord is just down the road, Pittsburg is over the hill and Antioch can be driven to in just 30 minutes. We, the long-time Clayton residents, moved here and continue to live here because we find Clayton to be little slice of Heaven and we want to keep it that way. I, for one, don't want anything to change, including building "affordable housing" that will do nothing but bring unwanted criminal activity and clogged streets. Thank you again for your newsletter!! Keep them coming!!!!

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

Sun, Jun 5, 11:50 PM

to Claytonwatch94517@gmail.com

Hello,

I received your flyer that was placed on my doorstep by someone recently. After reading it I felt compelled to respond concerning a couple of things that I consider to be inaccurate about your flyer. Your flyer states that one candidate publicized that our city residents are racist. You claim that this could not be further from the truth. Only a non-minority person could possibly come to that conclusion. I have lived here for 22 plus years and as one of the few African American citizens in this city I must inform you that there is a strong smell of racism here. Why would I say this? Well, let start with last year. There were two occurrences of someone putting an effigy of a hanging Black man in one of the parks. I know this is true because I found the first one and called the police. Although they did come and cut the effigy down, there was no follow up investigation and they didn't even do a police report on it as far as I know. If they did, I was not even interviewed. In addition to this, I have been doing a 5 mile walk in clayton everyday for many years now. One day I was walking and a White guy in a van pulled up behind me and asked why I was walking in his neighborhood. When I refused to answer he threatened to call the police because I was suspicious. It wasn't until I threatened to kick his ass if he didn't leave me alone that he burned rubber while hurling "N" words out his window at me. Around about 2015 I was walking across the street on Indian way. I was in the crosswalk and the light was Green for me. There was a car stopped waiting to go. As I passed by the front of that car I heard the engine rev up and I got hit so hard that I flew over his hood and hit the ground hard. There were witnesses who worked at the golf course who saw what happened. When the police arrived they told them what they had seen as I was taken to the hospital in an ambulance. The driver of the vehicle claimed he didn't see me because I am dark. He was allowed to leave without even being ticketed for hitting me in the crosswalk. I wound up having to have brain surgery (craniotomy). I can't help but wonder what would happen to me if I ran over a White person in the crosswalk during the day and claimed I didn't see him because he was bright. There are many other instances I could site but I won't bore you with it because it is obvious by your flyer that you are biased and living in an entirely different town than the Clayton I live in. I have had bottles and trash thrown at me by vehicles passing by while they yelled the "N" word. I have encountered people who I have spoken to that ignored me and I have even known other minorities that have encountered the same things I have. So, because you have made this error about racism not being in Clayton, a town that even the newspaper reported that there were people from here that travelled to Charlotte for the tiki torch Nazi extravaganza that took place in 2018. On several occasions I have had to ask Safeway to remove racist graffiti that was painted on its fence in the back which happens to be right next to my house. On one occasion I was walking home and passed a group of teen boys. As I passed them I heard one of them ask "When did niggers move in here?" So, clearly, from a minority standpoint, there is a racist problem in Clayton. Because of this I consider the rest of your flyer to be less than reliable and have discounted it as more political lies and dribble. Any future flyers will be thrown in the trash without being read. By the way, I have never replied to a political newsletter before but this one so disturbed my peace that I had to write back.

Regards

[REDACTED]

Sun, Jun 12, 4:38 PM

to Claytonwatch94517

I appreciate the info and it disturbs me. I really don't have an answer and I don't know what to do. I hate that some of our government doesn't even live in Clayton. I feel that they want to hurt Clayton cause they can't afford to live here. It took me and my spouse a lot of hours past the 40hr to earn money to be able to get here. I want to say to them to grow up! It scares me what they are doing.

Sent from my iPhone

Tue, Jun 14, 4:56 PM

Hello Bill and Gary,

My husband and I are Clayton residents and have been here since 2013. Not a long time, compared to some residents, but we certainly call this our home sweet home. We have noticed a dramatic change in Clayton's landscaping maintenance, or lack thereof, particularly around the library close to where we live. We are also alarmed by the graffiti, which these days seems to be everyone (check out the new comments using the "f" word above the creek at the corner of Clayton and Marsh Creek Road. We are also shocked by all of the garbage around town. I emailed the City back in March wondering if they were planning to host an Earth Day Clean Up Day in the City, as they had in the past and they said no and when I asked why they said "don't know." I almost thought about organizing an informal clean up around town, but I'm working woman who was particularly busy that month.

If you are a group of volunteers who need more voices, please let me know and would love to meet up with you if you host any get togethers. I was a big supporter of Jeff Wan (still am) and I'm still waiting for him to become Mayor one day. Hopefully that will happen soon!

Looking forwards to chatting/meeting with you in the future!

