

November 15, 2015

Dear Chief & Pepper:

I wanted to take a few moments to confirm the context of our meeting last Friday as I strongly feel two different meetings took place simultaneously, one overlaid on top of the other. As I am brushed aside I desire to keep my record clear as I have obviously been instrumental in not only the genesis of Art Alley, but as well it's continued history over these past years and I believe that the plan you told me of does not steer us toward the results desired, is not sustainable, and deeply infringes on private property rights - something I have always opposed and has historically occurred mostly through various subtle and veiled forms of coercion and intimidation.

I was told that the Chief wanted to meet with me to discuss how to reduce the crime in Art Alley, and so that was what I thought the meeting I was attending was to be about. I was not told Pepper would be there, but once I learned what the meeting I was actually attending was about, I understood why she was. As I noted, Chief, one could interpret that as a form of intimidation in an attempt to suppress my dissent. I, of course, don't, but one certainly could.

It quickly became clear that my presence was not actually requested to get my input of how to solve the problems of Art Alley. My presence was requested by people with power for the purpose of being told what they were going to do in Art Alley, which is contrary to what I believe needs to be done. While I was allowed to talk, my thoughts will not be heeded. The narrative of power will overtake any good ideas I may have. I will also note that my experience with meetings such as this, and their actual subtext, is not to gain my input, but rather because it is necessary to feign courtesy in the arcane world of those with power. It allows a plausible "We tried to work with him" argument down the road, after which time I am marginalized as "difficult" or some other such pejorative adjective. But that's not the correct word to use simply because I hold my ground against pressure from the powerful. The word for that is "Principled" but that word does not fit a marginalization strategy (be it conscious or unconscious) so it is not used. In fact, as I have noted both in our meeting and do so here again, the point was not try to work with me, but rather for me to be told what was going to happen. That's too bad, as I have a lot of good input for Art Alley, as well as this community as a whole. I think there are multiple examples of which you are both aware in which this dynamic has been used against me, only to later learn that the things I had originally noted eventually proved true. Not only does power not want to be questioned, but it gets so used to its power it begins to think that it is listening when it is not. I've heard it described it as "the unconscious hubris held within the privilege of power." Chief, we saw this last Tuesday at the Mother Butler Center as well, didn't we?

In Art Alley I have a longstanding and continual objection to the forcing of people to surrender their property rights in this manner, which has long been the “M.O. of Art Alley. In the beginning this took place mostly through charisma and inaccurate representations of the nature and scope of permission given by property owners. Now that Art Alley has fallen into the province of gentrification and those who push that agenda, the pressure comes from the narrative that it is important to our economy vis-à-vis the tourism industry to have Art Alley. I objected to those early methods of coercion as strongly as I am objecting to these now although they differ some.

I can not state enough my objection to (1) any attempt at creating any law regulating Art Alley in any manner as existing laws are fine and just need to be enforced, and (2) the RCAC’s involvement in such an ordinance. As noted, “Art Alley” is people’s private property and operated at its best - in fact the only time it operated well - when that fact was first and foremost. Now, of course, money is driving the agenda, not art (e.g. marketing Rapid City with our new brand as an “Artist“ community to tourists). As well, it has been on the RCAC watch for the past three years, we are seeing the result of that, and it is not good. The RCAC is only trying to create its own relevancy at the expense of our private property. I do not believe that there will be any changes that make the RCAC more effective in the operation of Art Alley than it has been, or create any confidence whatsoever in how it will operate our private property in the future. I suppose we will see, and I hope for the best, but it seems clear to me the path charted is simply kicking the can down the road while we all pretend Art Alley is full of art, not a liability, and a haven for crime and vandalism.

In any event, I know you both are busy so I won’t belabor my point any further at this time. I just wanted to make my record clear that I attended a very different meeting, even though we were all in the same room.

I appreciate your time and to once again have the fascinating opportunity to personally observe the inner workings of power. For both I thank you.

Sincerely,



Dennis Halterman