

## MAYOR'S RESPONSE FOR APOLOGY AND PETITION FOR RECALL

\*\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE EFFECTIVE AUGUST 2, 2016 @ 3:00 PM

City Administrator Randy Hinchliffe and I first had contact with the Nestle Corporation when we were invited to attend a meeting at the Port of Walla Walla and representatives of the Nestle Corporation. At that meeting, Nestle representatives advised that they could be interested in building a water bottling plant in Waitsburg. The driver for that would depend on the quality and quantity of available water. At that time, Randy and I advised that no matter the outcome of this offer, we wanted nothing that could possibility divide our community. The representatives asked for confidentiality of this proposal until they could determine the feasibility of the project, again based on quality and quantity. We agreed to that request, knowing that it was a common practice, based on the magnitude of this proposal. (The decision was reinforced by the editorial in the Union Bulletin on 7-25-16. Thank you, for being open minded about this proposal.)

Approximately one month later, Randy, our city attorney, and myself participated in a conference call with a Nestle attorney. We discussed proposed scope of work details and a request for continued confidentiality. We refused a continuance of confidentiality because of our concern of the appearance of secrecy.

At that meeting, we agreed to make it a point of discussion at our next Council Meeting. This was done in executive session at the June meeting. This then became a discussion item for the July Meeting.

**Fact:** Access to all of our springs has been severely restricted because of heavy brush, blackberry vines, downed timber and eroded mountainside roads. Between the June and July Council Meetings, Nestle offered to clear the brush and downed trees and rebuild the mountain roads to aid in the access to the various springs. This was to be done at no cost to the City and the City would have had to contract to have the work done

because of our lack of equipment capable to complete the task. Randy and I, along with Jim Lynch, our city engineer, attended the work project to assure it was done as agreed. The Nestle representative/contractor had no access to the springs themselves. During the work, two leaks were discovered, one was a major leak. The Nestle representative indicated they would assist with the repairs since they already had the needed equipment in place. At the July 20<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, Councilman Kuykendall immediately and indignantly moved that this work cease and desist. After that motion passed, he then made a motion for the City to allow up to \$5000 for the leak repair. I question if this was a wise use of our taxpayers dollars when it could have been done for free.

After several years of working with our City Administrator, I have discovered that our concerns for Waitsburg are similar. We both always kept an open mind, we were willing to listen to others, and we worked toward what was best for the community. In our positions, we have a duty to be open minded, unbiased and make decisions based on common sense and actual facts. These decisions must be based on what may be good for Waitsburg. I believe that city council members also have that same obligation. We cannot and should not allow personal bias, feelings or hearsay or social media/internet to play a part in our decisions. We should all know that whatever we read on the internet is not always true or the complete story. In this situation, Randy and I were not given an opportunity to explain the how or why of the sequence of events. Councilman Kuykendall and most of the public present at the meeting were quick to jump to their own conclusions without knowing the actual facts.

I know that Randy and I both have no opinion, pro or con about the possible Nestle proposal, not until we hear all of actual facts. I do believe that we have the obligation to our community to research and listen to any possibility of community and economic development. Again, decisions must be based on true facts, not hearsay, innuendo or what may be posted on face book. To date, that has not been the case in this situation, at least with two of our council members.

When our voters/taxpayers put me in office it was an indication that they respected and trusted me to make decisions for the good of the community. I honestly feel that my respect and trust by the community has been severely damaged by this situation. I must also say that my respect and trust with two of our City Council members has also been damaged. As a result of this, I am submitting my resignation effective the day and time of this press release, which is immediately.

To those who have pushed for my recall, I say you won! You have won the battle, but if you continue to reject all possibilities of growth for this community, you will not win the war. Our community will continue to regress as long as you maintain your “mob” attitude when possible community development presents itself. After all, this situation is not the first time this has happened. I am embarrassed that our community has treated some of the presenters on possible community or economic development very rudely.

But I also give you a huge thank you. Gwen & I will have the time to do things we enjoy. We will be able to spend time in our RV, at our cabin, or on the road. We will both have a lot less stress in our lives, and I’m sure our health will improve. Life is Good!

To the three fellow City Council members that started this adventure with me, I am sorry for abandoning you, but I am sure you can appreciate why. Thank you for always using common sense and basing your decisions on hard facts and always doing your best for the community.

To my community supporters, thank you for standing by me with your unquestioned support these past years. You will not be forgotten, I leave office with my head held high knowing that my intentions have always been for the benefit of the community.

Please remember that you have an invaluable resource in Randy Hinchliffe as our City Administrator. He has managed to obtain millions of dollars in State and Federal Grants, all for the improvement of our community. He has also managed to keep our limited budget in the black while many other communities are not. You also have the best City Crew in most recent

history of Waitsburg. Please take time to say thanks once in a while when you get a chance.

To Mr. Hockersmith: Regarding your letter requesting an apology:

Apologize for what? Trying to improve economic development in our Community? I think not! You see I was only trying to do the job that I was elected to do.

Live well & Stay well!

Walt Gobel