

Susy MacGillivray

12 May, 2016

Mayor Mike Savage
1841 Argyle Street
Halifax, NS
B3J 3A5

via email
mayor@halifax.ca

Re: Mr. Whitman's Inappropriate Use of Social Media

Dear Mayor Savage:

I am writing to complain about Councillor Matt Whitman's inappropriate and unprofessional use of social media. Yesterday Councillor Whitman shared a post on his Facebook page about the Cornwallis review decision. His post stated that Cornwallis was "not perfect" and he went on to ask the question "How bad was he?". I found Councillor Whitman's Facebook post to be completely disrespectful and insensitive. I commented that I was disappointed with Council's decision not to review public sites named for Cornwallis and asked him how he voted on this issue. Councillor Whitman responded and then promptly removed the comment. I sent him a message in which I expressed my utter shock at his behaviour and he proceeded to delete me. A lengthy Facebook conversation ensued in which Councillor Whitman indicated that I should "email, call or write" and that he "[does not] require posts about how disappointed you are with me." He also recommended that I "praise others publicly and criticize personally (that's a good rule of thumb for you)." I was completely appalled at the Councillor's use of censorship on the Facebook page that he uses to promote his role as an elected public representative. Councillor Whitman eventually removed the comment and the thread.

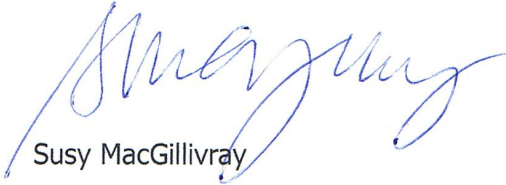
I asked Councillor Whitman if he would be at the Hubbards Farmers Market on the weekend, as he often is, so that I could discuss this issue with him in person. He went on to inform me that "criticism should be private and personal. One on one. Not on a social media site And not at the market..... Sorry you are shocked and disappointed..... Quite a day for you." He also claimed that my criticism was some kind of personal attack both in messages to me and on his Facebook page. I found this to be particularly offensive as I have known and supported him for years.

Councillor Whitman was interviewed by CBC Radio on the subject of the Cornwallis decision yesterday and he stated that he "was hearing from his constituents against any name change". I can only say that this is utterly misleading. My personal experience is that he silences anyone who openly criticizes him. Councillor Whitman uses his Facebook profile as a political tool. All of his constituents should be free to comment, offer constructive criticism and express their support or opposition on his posts that

relate to his work on Council. To silence constructive criticism is a profoundly undemocratic practice and completely unacceptable. Councillor Whitman has gone on to block me from commenting on his Facebook page and has blocked others who have stood up to comment on his behaviour. While Councillor Whitman should take the opportunity to engage in public discourse on his Facebook page, he chooses to share a censored one sided view.

I have openly shared my conversation with Councillor Whitman by posting it on my personal Facebook page. I made it clear to Councillor Whitman that this was my intention. I would be happy to forward this conversation to you. It is a classic example of how not to conduct yourself on social media. I have been approached by one of the local universities to use this conversation as an example in a graduate studies program on Social Media in Public Communications. I have received requests to speak to the media on this matter. I have also received feedback from other constituents who have experienced the same treatment from Councillor Whitman. I would like to know if HRM Councillors have guidelines on the use of social media as a political tool, specifically on the need for transparency. I strongly recommend that Councillor Whitman be brought to task on this most dishonest practice of censorship and misrepresentation. I welcome any discussion that you would like to have regarding this matter.

Sincerely,



Susy MacGillivray

cc: HRM Councillor Matt Whitman