

Two Harbors Mayor Will Not Resign

By Katee Rose

Chris Swanson, mayor of Two Harbors, spoke Wednesday, June 1st to the public. He was joined by his wife and young son when he addressed the community. He started off by saying he will not be taking any questions after he making his comments.

The duty of an elected official is to address the concerns of the public and serve the will of the people. In the last several months throughout this debacle, he has neglected to answer many of the public's questions and has deflected any accusations or concerns into the potential blurred lines between his personal and business interests. This has resulted in a resign or recall committee being formed, and a successful petition with over 500 signatures asking for his resignation being submitted to the council. The city's attorney, Tim Costley, has submitted a memorandum of opinion stating he believes the mayor has repeatedly used his official position as mayor "for personal benefit or business interests".

The mayor continued the speech saying, "One thing I know for a fact, when the community elected me, twice as mayor and 3 times as city councilor, they've always known I was going to be a different leader than what they were used to". The second time the mayor was elected he ran unopposed. He said he's campaigned as a visionary and he has rolled up his sleeves and done whatever it took to get the "job done". "Yes, I took a different approach."

Swanson stated he has put the time and money into what he believes in. Commenting it was not about him or his family getting ahead, and the results of him being mayor "has been astounding" for the town. Swanson stood before the public and took credit for several developments and achievements in the community, such as sidewalk improvements and new businesses and state funding for the wastewater treatment plant. "Let's be honest, more has been done in the last 5 years than has been done in the last 20," he stated.

In a 6-1 vote at the last Two Harbors City Council meeting, the council moved forward with the next steps of a recall election. Swanson was the only member to vote against it.

Swanson claims that there is no evidence of any of the accusations, or that he has been found guilty of anything. Saying he is still

"waiting for an apology". Lets be crystal clear, it is not about mayor Chris Swanson and if he did things right or wrong, but does the community of Two Harbors want to get things done or do they want to stop and go backwards," he says.

The mayor finished his announcement, saying he will not resign nor will he abandon the vision that he has for Two Harbors. "The best is yet to come. I will not resign. No questions." The speech ends and Swanson exited the building.

Now that the period of time for the mayor to voluntarily resign has passed after the 6:1 vote for a recall, the city will have to organize a recall election as soon as August this summer.

"Two Harbors has been the laughing stock of the state. Our reputation has been tarnished and we want to restore some dignity and faith in our elected officials," says Todd Ronning, one of the resign or recall committee organizers.

Attorney Brendan Tupa, who filed a lawsuit against the City of Two Harbors, members of the city council, representatives of the resign or recall committee, and press, appears to no longer be with the law firm Droel, PLLC. The lawsuits were filed by an ally of Swanson, Timothy Jezierski, who is not a resident of the city of Two Harbors, and two anonymous residents, John Doe and Jane Doe. There has been no updates on where those lawsuits are currently at. It is not clear whether Swanson's litigation will be taken over by another Droel associate, whether Tupa will continue to represent Swanson independently or with another firm, or if they will be dropped altogether.

Since the recall was submitted the mayor has changed his status with his business. The mayor is still owner of PureDriven digital marketing, but has been "removed from the company" and is no longer listed as the CEO. He is no longer on the leadership team or involved in the decision making of the company. Those responsibilities have been transferred to Jason Sunday, who has worked with the company the last 5 years. It is unclear whether Swanson plans on selling the company in the near future. PureDriven's slogan: "Building trust and giving hope in an industry built on lies."



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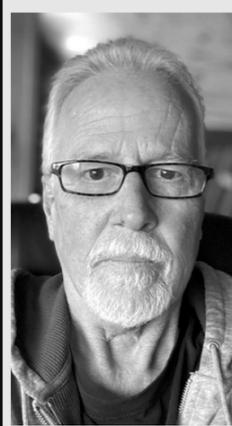
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The Long Way Home

By Steve Fernlund



sky.

As young parents with four kids, we were hyper-alert to their happiness and safety. Other than an occasional night away from us, staying with siblings and grandparents, our kids had never been away from their doting parents. So when we heard that fourth-grade teacher Mr. Porter was planning a several-night field trip at a camp in Northern Minnesota, I had many questions.

Attending the information meeting at the school I quickly raised my hand when question time was called.

First, if I am paying taxes in Hennepin County to fund parks and nature centers, why do we have to send kids on an overnight trip to a nature center? Murmurs were heard in the crowd.

When our oldest daughter was entering the fourth grade, we moved the family from East Bloomington, MN to West Bloomington, MN. To understand the cultural ramifications of this move, think about moving from Hovland to Lutsen. Or maybe think about the Jeffersons moving to that deluxe apartment in the

Next, what about kids like mine who haven't yet been away from Mom on an overnight trip? More murmurs.

Finally, what about kids who couldn't afford the \$40 to \$50 costs? Again, more murmurs.

Mr. Porter answered every question. Not necessarily to my satisfaction, but then I wasn't ready to be satisfied. It was only several months later, when he and I became fast friends and I found him to be a selfless and excellent educator, that I was satisfied that his field trips were a great idea. Plus, my daughter thoroughly enjoyed her first field trip.

As the meeting drew to a close, I realized that the murmurs I heard might have meant I'd drawn unwanted attention from the crowd. Maybe I had stirred the pot, so to speak. Expecting to be chastised for haranguing a beloved teacher, a group of school moms instead thanked me for speaking up and asking questions they wanted to ask. Then they recruited me to run for PTA President. Me, of all people.

So I won the election (being the only candidate). What an experience. If you think it is easy running a PTA meeting, think again.

It seemed like all these people who had questions for Mr. Porter were afraid to speak up. I was reminded of this after seeing the responses this newspaper and I received to a recent column I

wrote about the calamity that is "Overtourism."

It's not unusual that we get an email or call about something the paper has printed, both positive and negative. The sheer number of responses to the "Overtourism" piece is significant though. And not one person has chastised me yet for trying to kill the Golden Goose that is tourism.

A significant number of positive comments have come from people in the tourism food chain. Some examples:

- Thought-provoking write-up. Stir this pot.
- Growth does have its limits
- We need to address these issues as a community.
- We are losing who we are and why we are that way. It is not just happening on the North Shore, but everywhere something special sets that place apart.

The people of Two Harbors have shown one way, maybe the best way, to come together to regain their community in the successful "Resign or Recall" effort against their unpopular mayor. The people of the North Shore need to come together now to salvage what they can of their community from the promoters and profiteers of Overtourism.

Hearing the murmurs from the crowd after that column, I think the pot has been stirred.

Steve Fernlund is a retired business owner, living in Cook County. He was publisher and editor of the Cook County News Herald in the 1990's.

Got a good Cook County story for him? Let us know. Call 218-226-3335 or Email: steve.fernlund@gmail.com