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Last Saturday, the Davenport Democratic Party PAC (formed when nonpartisan elections came into being in 1998) endorsed its candidates for Davenport's city council. The process, which should be equitable to all, was nothing more than a stacked deck of family and friends of incumbents who had the voting power to endorse their own. Before we examine this family gathering, the distinction needs to be made that this PAC in no way reflects the majority of residents who participate with honor in the Democratic Party. This PAC is a small clique of activists, whose predominant membership includes incumbent councilmen and their families, friends, and professional acquaintances. The organizational core of this PAC includes Aldermen Morritz, Sherwood, Englemann, Caldwell, and Brown. This should tell the public all they need to know about the mission of this PAC, and exactly whose interests are being served with its efforts.

The leadership of the PAC sent representatives (Aldermen Hean and Caldwell) to Mayor Phil Yerington asking him to consider running for reelection because they firmly believed that Yerington had the political wherewithal to pull the trigger on the Vision Iowa project proposed for downtown. They implored Yerington to run again, promising to try and secure an additional pay raise through an amendment to the new ordinance governing the mayor's salary, and supporting any efforts in the legal department to ensure that Phil's pension stays intact. (Yerington maintains his only reason for not running again is strictly a money issue.)

Meanwhile, on Saturday during the PAC's endorsement meeting, the very same leadership, along with two-thirds of the members, endorsed Bill Sherwood for mayor without so much as a conversation with Yerington after all their courting. The PAC is incapable of any kind of consistency, adherence to its own platform, or holding endorsed candidates accountable. This is evidenced by its willingness to endorse candidates who have failed to carry out most of their campaign promises, or advance their party's platform in any meaningful way. Such lack of accountability reflects the hollow nature of this PAC.

Throughout the last city council's two-year term, various members of this PAC were repeatedly asked why they were not confronting the aldermen they endorsed with the councilmen's failure to conform to the campaign promises. Most agreed that the aldermen fell woefully short of their expectations, and that their displeasure would be reflected in the next election.

Obviously these were vacant words, void of any real conviction. The PAC's lack of political substance only proves they do not have the interest of the public, let alone Democrats, as part of their mission. The Davenport Democratic Party PAC is nothing more than a strict election machine, controlled by the majority of Democratic incumbents and their families and friends, to get them reelected. Reviewing the voting membership of the PAC shows a significant number of voting members with the last name Moritz. The PAC has eight ward committees that should be made up of 10 citizens from each ward. In this PAC's case, most of the incumbents or their spouses are also their own ward's chairmen. Alderman Hean's ward committee saw the conflict of interest and replaced Hean with a ward resident. None of the other wards followed suit. In fact, only one other resident from the 8th Ward even bothered to show up on behalf of Alderman Tom Englemann, yet he was endorsed anyway. How can any newcomer to the process expect to get fair consideration with the deck so stacked? As one PAC member put it, "It is a democratic process, even though they pack the place with their own supporters." In the 1st

Ward alone, five of the nine voting members were Moritzes, including Alderman Roxanna Moritz, her husband and in-laws.

The bottom line is that nothing remotely resembling political debate about the issues, examining voting records relative to consistency with platform planks or PAC policy, is even a consideration. In fact, some argue that in some cases the platform was made broader this year to avoid defining the issues rather than clarifying them. To put it mildly, this is a family affair posing as a political action committee.

To further emphasize the PAC's political absurdity, this week it moved to endorse single candidates before the primary, alienating its own fellow Democrats in a preliminary race where all should be welcome. But the real evidence of the true purpose of the PAC is the endorsements themselves. With the exception of Pat Egly (who is not challenging Alderman Caldwell because Caldwell is not running for the 3rd Ward, but for Alderman-at-Large…again), the rest are all incumbents. Never mind that to a man—and woman—this is one of the worst slates of aldermen the city of Davenport has had the misfortune to endure.

The lack of respect for the process has ruined this PAC's credibility. They endorse incumbent candidates who reneged on their original campaign promises, they censured a fellow Democrat for speaking his mind (that would be Bob Yapp, who incidentally has announced his candidacy for mayor with the full support of Mayor Yerington), and they play political games behind one another's backs to further their own agendas as evidenced by last weekend's fiasco with Yerington. But what is truly disturbing is that many of the members who involve themselves with this PAC (but who are not related to any of the incumbents) appear to be condoning the very lack of accountability they claim to care about but do not enforce. Long-time Democrats and activists appear to agree with the endorsements, making these folks equally culpable. It is a sad day indeed when the life-long patriots of Davenport endorse these pretenders just because they are Democrats.

If voters examine the PAC's endorsed incumbents' voting records, they will reveal that Aldermen Morritz, Englemann, Brown, and Sherwood advocated special interests over the public's good in the majority of instances. Moreover, these same incumbents voted to censor the public, not once, but twice. For this reason alone, they should have zero chance for reelection. Examine the voting records and compare them to these aldermen's campaign promises, and there will be no denying the consistent betrayal by these elected officials of the public trust.

The question should be asked of this PAC: What possible rationale or justification could there be for endorsing Bill Sherwood for mayor, or for endorsing Aldermen Moritz, Brown, or Englemann? These four aldermen clearly ran on four central issues during their last campaigns for city council: no TIFs on 53rd Street; open government; containment of urban sprawl; and correcting the city's debacle with public-owned land at 53rd Street and Eastern Avenue, which included reimbursing CURV for all its efforts on taxpayers' behalf. How can any of these aldermen be considered acceptable candidates when they reneged on each of these core issues? Not only did they vote in favor of nearly all development along 53rd Street, which constitutes some of the poorest urban planning in the state and only exacerbated sprawl, but

they championed a TIF for Sentry Insurance along 53rd Street at Utica Ridge Road. All four aldermen, plus Alderman McGivern, were strong proponents of the Super Wal-Mart and the use of SSMIDs to finance it, a tool normally restricted to redeveloping blighted areas. All four aldermen were extremely instrumental in censoring the public by eliminating the portion of council meetings in which the public can speak to issues not on the agenda. Alderman Sherwood publicly admitted, with no sense of remorse, that most of city business is conducted behind closed doors. Finally, members of CURV worked tirelessly to get to get these four aldermen elected, especially Alderman Sherwood, in the belief that they would resolve the financially perilous circumstances surrounding the 53rd & Eastern Mixed Use Development project that the grass roots citizens group successfully fought so hard to stop. Without CURV's participation in Sherwood's campaign, it is safe to say he would not have been elected. He publicly promised to make right the wrongs of the previous council and to make CURV whole. But the minute he was elected to office, he ceased all contact with CURV and refused to intervene on their behalf. Furthermore, he did absolutely nothing to remedy the situation at 53rd & Eastern Avenue. This is true for the other three aldermen, as well, including Aldermen Nickolas and Ambrose, who also abandoned CURV in the end.

In summary, the four core issues these incumbents ran on were completely abandoned once they were elected. Meanwhile, Alderman Sherwood established a well-documented vendetta against Mayor Phil Yerington because Yerington had the good political sense not to endorse a select few of his fellow Democratic candidates who were members of the new PAC during the last election. For that, Sherwood never relented in his grudge against the mayor. This lack of professionalism, let alone adult conduct, reveals Sherwood as unsuitable to be our next mayor. But more importantly, there is no reason to trust anything any of these politicians promise. They have proven themselves unworthy to hold public office.

If voters analyze the past two-year term, they will recognize a pattern of voting among four Davenport aldermen who formed a political clique, voting in unison on nearly every issue. Aldermen Moritz, McGivern, Sherwood, and Brown collectively did more long-term damage to our city with their visionless approval of development that contributed to unprecedented sprawl versus sound planning and sustainable growth than the previous coalition of Aldermen Carroll, Lank, and Tappendorf. As voters, we must not allow this kind of political colluding and manipulation. Thanks in large part to Aldermen Englemann and Caldwell, who proved themselves to be at odds with their constituencies in the face of this coalition and who voted with the four more often than not, this coucnil was able to effectively implement the agendas of special interest groups for the past two years. (How many times did Englemann and Caldwell say they were voting one way, and then voted the opposite after the pressure was put on?)

And let's never forget the disgraceful abuse of power perpetrated by Aldermen Moritz, Sherwood, Brown, and Englemann on 22-year city employee veteran Mike Meloy. Remember that these aldermen used their positions to terminate Meloy based on political vindictiveness rather than proper procedure. This kind of conduct is unforgivable on the part of these elected officials and considering them for reelection is a classic case of rewarding bad behavior.