

## “Grandstanding”

-Chris Smithson, Southern Pines native, resident, and Councilmember

Lately, Walter Bull, publisher of the Sandhills Pulse, has been critical of my actions during Council meetings. That's fine. It is certainly his right to form his own opinions. Last night after the meeting, even though I voted the way he seems to have thought I should have voted, he was still critical of me. He said the written statements I have read at a few meetings are “the worst type of grandstanding.” I replied that for months and months everyone who wanted to has been able to get up at hearings and say whatever they wanted. Further, it was now my turn to say what I wanted and to explain to people the basis for the reasoning behind my decisions. I think the people who care to know the “why” deserve to hear it. Walter's reply to that seemed to indicate he doesn't even like the fact that people can freely speak their minds at public hearings.

I realize some of my statements on this whole PUD and Pine Needles issue over the last year may have added 5-10 minutes to the length of any particular meeting. If I have been a little long-winded at times, I apologize, but these are trying times for the town and the complex issues deserve attention, review, and explanation. It certainly doesn't help anyone if I just sit there and say “aye” or “no.”

Ironically, one of the main reasons I created this website was to avoid grandstanding at meetings. There are many things that need to be said (see my “Local Issues” page) and I did not feel bringing up everything at Council meetings and reading even longer statements about issues not even before us in hearings would be productive. Those who care about bigger, long-range, or philosophical issues could come here and I could spare those at meetings who aren't interested from having to listen to me. It also provides access for those who can't make it to Council meetings or those who wish to get their information from more sources than just the Pilot's articles and editorials.

Sorry Walter. People deserve to know how and why I come to certain conclusions on issues before the town. Sometimes, as with the PUD and Pine Needles, the “how” and “why” are complex and cannot be articulated in 25 words or less. Considering all the positive feedback I get when I lay it all out for everyone, even from people who don't agree with me, I think I'm on the right track.

Chris