

# OPINION

## Some should get out of 'Whitefish's way'

Some Whitefish political figures recently wrote a divisive editorial describing the "Whitefish way." They criticized those of us who have worked hard the past two years to improve Whitefish government and make it more responsive to you.

According to their editorial, I and others "have advocated for unraveling long-held policies that would undermine the health of our downtown, promote sprawl and limit access to recreation around town. Their way is not the Whitefish way."

Really? Two years ago when I took office with two other new city councilors, our city was suffering:

- We had a budget cash loss of \$1.2 million dollars.
- We had been ordered to pay \$400,000 for a lawsuit

### In My View

Phil Mitchell

that could have been settled at no cost by giving the landowner a building permit.

• The council had adopted a Critical Areas Ordinance that was so incomprehensible that realtors required buyers and sellers to sign a disclaimer about it.

• The council had angered the county to the point that the county had withdrawn from the Interlocal Agreement and the city had sued the county.

• The city was wasting precious resources litigating an ice cream cone mural.

• Our population growth had stopped (the census shows Whitefish added only five people between 2008 and 2010), our schools were losing students at a dramatic rate, and our real estate markets were suffering badly.

Since then, we have made great progress:

• We are close to bringing the budget under control, although our progress has been hampered because we do not have the votes of a majority of councilors dedicated to responsible spending.

• We stopped medical marijuana shops from proliferating in our town.

• We successfully mediated the U.S. 93 South corridor controversy.

• We replaced the former city attorney with a new attorney who first tries to

solve problems out of court. • We settled the lawsuit with the county and adopted

fought against our efforts the past two years to balance the budget, simplify

folks who want jobs have them, and helping our high school make long overdue renovations.

As we do this, I'm sure the committee for the politically correct "Whitefish way" will criticize me and others again for not following their dictates.

But for me, I'm tired of the handful of people with no ideas beyond stopping growth, spending taxpayer's money, suing folks, and adding regulations who criticize me and others for trying to move our great city in a better direction. They ran City Hall before and it created unnecessary problems for us all.

To them, I say get out of Whitefish's way.

— Phil Mitchell  
Whitefish

*They ran City Hall before and it created unnecessary problems for us all.*

a new Interlocal Agreement that is fair to both sides.

• We have not passed any land use laws that infringe on land owner's property rights or divide our community.

We have done all of this while successfully attending to the business of running the city. But, not surprisingly, three candidates for this fall's election endorsed by this "Whitefish way" elite crowd — John Muhlfeld, Frank Sweeney and Richard Hildner — have consistently

our regulations and end senseless litigation with our neighbors.

Moreover, this same crowd wants to spend \$6-10 million of your tax dollars for a new City Hall when we could have a fine one for about one-third that amount. Is an expensive City Hall the best use of your scarce tax dollars these days?

This coming year I sincerely hope that we will turn our attention to reinvigorating the economic vitality of Whitefish, making sure that



**I'm Phil Mitchell. Aren't you tired of the divisive attitude of those who think their "way" is the only way?**

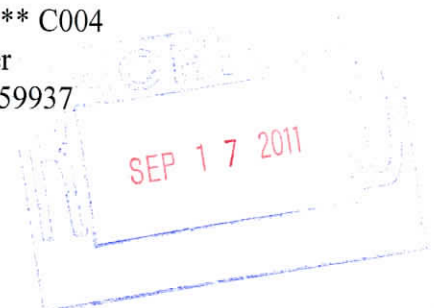
**Muhlfeld, Sweeney, and Hildner are part of the problem. It's time for a new approach.**

- **TOO MUCH LITIGATION**
- **OVER-REGULATION**
- **CRITICAL AREAS ORDINANCE**

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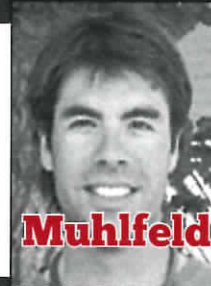


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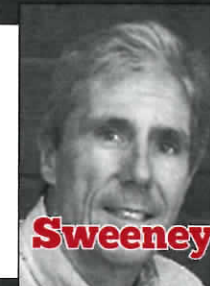


**Their way created so many problems before,**

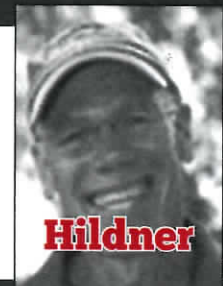
- **\$400,000 JUDGMENT AGAINST CITY**



**Muhlfeld**



**Sweeney**



**Hildner**

**why give them a chance to do it again?**

- **OVERSPENDING**
- **LAWSUIT AGAINST COUNTY**

**Hostility. Division. Litigation.**  
 Let's not return to a Whitefish where disputes are taken to court; where taxpayer dollars are spent freely and against residents' wishes.

**These three are running as a team with a specific agenda for Whitefish. It's not one that most of us will like. Don't give them the opportunity to impose their "way" on Whitefish again.**