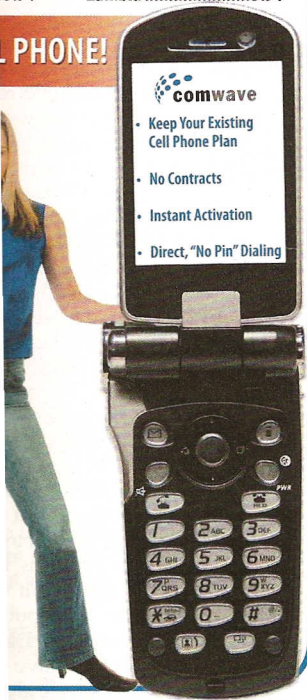


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# Great to glorious

In the fall of 2005, it was all the rage to herald then-new Mayor Sam Sullivan as the "The Champ". The artist formerly known as "Slammin' Sammy" upset Vision Vancouver bulldog Jim Green, in a close but decisive enough victory. He had a ton of help at this, though.

The adulation lasted for all of about a month before the implosion began.

Elsewhere, up the highway and across the quiet fields that roll over a gently winding road to the City of Surrey, many might have missed a real superstar in the making.

After convincingly trouncing then Mayor Doug McCallum's preposterously cartoonish campaign for re-election, Dianne Watts, dragon slayer, became a woman with a mission: Take Surrey from great to glorious.

Ms. Watts promised that Surrey's quality of life would improve under her stewardship. She called for a reasonable approach to development and assured that communities would thrive and the environment would certainly not be forgotten in the process. Her mantra of "balanced growth" would give rise to a greater emphasis on social issues, beginning at City Hall, where Mr. McCallum's mishandling of a sexual harassment complaint during the leadup to the 2005 election, became the impetus for an appropriate mass exodus by hierarchs from the then ruling SET (Surrey Electors Team) – Ms. Watts, as Councillor, included.

Ms. Watts has methodically and carefully crafted a platform that reaches out as much as it gives direction; entices as much as it delivers.

In a comprehensive platform to deal with homelessness, drugs and crime, Ms. Watts has extolled the virtues, in detail, of all levels of government working in tandem.

It wouldn't be done piecemeal and co-ordination would be managed by the City of Surrey. She travelled to Great

Britain and New York City to glean from their experiences; met with Prime Minister Harper, Premier Campbell, Attorney General Oppal and MPs and MLAs throughout Surrey with a message intended to attract and keep their interest in Surrey.

She advocated community courts that would send criminals into drug treatment, job training and housing assistance; unveiled a Crime Reduction Plan that works closely with the RCMP and insists that they, in turn, work hand-in-glove with community and neighbourhood groups and associations. She also set sensible milestones that are achievable, and, above all else, did it with an open, determined mind.

No criminalizing the poor. No insane plans about replacing one drug with another. No retired hippies selling her psychobabble about how life works in bloody Holland. Clearly, no advice from Sam Sullivan's crew.

And she's making it all work. The polemics of the McCallum years are gone, replaced with concerted efforts to make Surrey an even better place to live, and we're only half way to the next election.

Is it any wonder, then, that earlier this month, Surrey Councillors Mary Martin, Linda Hepner and Barb Steele politely bolted from the grime-laden, moth-eaten perch of the Surrey Electors Team for the sunnier climes of Surrey First, Dianne Watts' shiny, new political vehicle?

Of course not. No exercise in political expediency, this; these are committed and intelligent people bound by their abiding love of community.

Dianne Watts is at the top of the Class of '05.

There's an old Chinese proverb that says, "If you drink the water, you must give great thanks to the man who dug the well when it's done..."

Well, what if it's a woman and she's just getting warmed up?



Surrey Mayor Diane Watts



Alex Tsakumis  
GUEST SHOT