

Crawford: Authoritarian rule overtaking city government

Letter to the Publisher,

In our community there is a legitimate concern that city government withholds information that citizens have a right to know, which has created a perception of secrecy.

I believe the perception is justified when considering the blowup in the Poland case and the closed meetings on the subject of the city attorney. In the air there's a feeling of a Star Chamber operation.

I believe that the city manager and certain members of the City Council have an attitude that is authoritarian. Such an attitude is accompanied by the thought that those who hold power are infallible, that public opinion should be discounted. Hence, government doesn't have to disclose information because the public can't be trusted with the information.

The authoritarian mind rejects the idea that citizens share a spirited and political equality. I believe, as the poet said, that if we do not meet people as equals, then we do not meet them at all.

Much of the secrecy behind closed doors is justified under the label of "personnel matters" that is often a cover up of mismanagement. Example: The city manager, city attorney [now gone] and a majority of the council did not want to report out a split council vote on the Poland appeal. Why not?

The fact is that behind closed doors, I learn who my colleagues really are.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe city councilman