

To Public Hearing	
Date:	Oct. 20 2008
Item #	14
Re:	BUDGING 8432
	# 8433

PUBLIC HEARING October 20, 2008 – Army Navy Air Force Unit 284
 My Name is Florence Gordon, I reside at 8111 Saunders Road, Richmond

Mr. Mayor and Councilors

I'm here tonight in support of the Army Navy Air Force Unit 284 and I'd like to share with you my reason. About a year ago I was asked to meet with the Executive of the Army Navy Air Force Unit 284 to help them with a project. At that meeting the Executive shared their year-end report, and that's when I discovered Richmond's "Best Kept Secret".

I, like many people in the community thought the Army Navy Air Force Club was a place for Veterans to get together and drink cheap beer. What I discovered was:

- Unit 284 was a meeting place that provided a social life for our Veterans, our Seniors, their spouses and friends.
- The Police, Firefighters and Paramedics are now part of their membership.
- That these Senior Members did a lot of fund raising in-house to support many charitable organizations, the Hospital, minor sports for our kids, the Food Bank, Senior Programs and the list goes on.

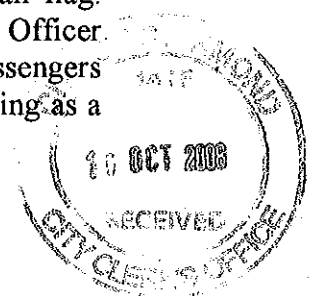
I asked the Members of Unit 284 why the community was unaware of all their charity work. They said "when we made a donation we never asked for recognition or media coverage". So I nominated them for the Chamber of Commerce - Association of the Year Award. When the film producer for the event unfolded their story on the screen the night of the Awards, there wasn't a dry eye as the Veterans stood proudly on stage.

When I learned about the challenges the members of Unit 284 faced trying to build an affordable Seniors housing complex that included a new Club I said to their Executive the property is valuable, why don't you sell it to a developer, put the money in the bank, secure your future and find a new location for your Club?

Their response was made very clear!

- They recognize the shortage of affordable senior housing, and they believe their mandate is to take the lead on this project for the community.
- They asked me, if I was aware that the soldiers returning from Bosnia and Afghanistan were the NEW Veterans – I did not.
- They said they wanted to build a Club that will welcome a new generation of Veterans and to be Mentors to the soldiers' returning home because the families and friends do not understand the adjustment the soldiers face – THEY UNDERSTOOD.

Recently an Officer boarded a plane and the flight attendant told him that he had been upgraded to business class. The Officer sat quietly holding a folded Canadian flag. When the plane landed the Pilot asked all the passengers to remain seated while Officer O'Brien escorted a soldier returning home from Afghanistan. When the passengers watched out the window they noticed Officer O'Brien standing to attention saluting as a casscate made its way down the conveyor belt.



We don't think about being touched by soldiers going off to be peace keepers in a war torn country, many of us are untouched by the toll a war takes on soldiers and their families, but reality set in pretty quickly if you were present last week when two soldiers recently returning from a tour of duty came into Unit 284 in Steveston and wanted to know if they were allowed to come into the Club. The Senior Veterans welcomed them with open arms.

In June 2008 my son was on the beaches of Normandy filming a television show. An elderly gentleman came by dressed in a blazer adorned with medals. The elderly gentleman told my son that he was badly injured during the Normandy invasion and it was the Canadian soldiers who found him and carried him to safety. He said he came every year on June 6th to pay his respects to the Canadian soldiers who had saved his life – today was June 6th.

I share these stories with you because they are a reminder of Canada's history and today's reality. There is a reason why the members of the Army Navy Air Force Unit 284 came into my life and I would be remiss if I didn't express my appreciation.

In a news article The Honorable Greg Thompson Minister of Veterans Affairs presented the first Commendations to 18 outstanding Canadians for their dedication to Canada's Veterans right here in the City of Richmond. He was quoted in the media as saying "these recipients are remarkable role models who help to inspire their fellow Canadians to fully appreciate the LEGACY of our Veterans".

With that said, I'm here tonight to support the Army Navy Air Force Unit 284.

Thank you.