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27 October 2021

Mayor Henderson and Members of Town Council  
Town of Cobourg  
55 King Street West  
Cobourg, ON  
K9A 2M2

Dear Mayor Henderson and Members of Town Council,

Several recent factors have taken place in the last few weeks that has encouraged me to share some thoughts (suggestions) with Town Council.

I read the Fall 2021 issue of the locally published Watershed magazine and was particularly captured by the article (Brookside: New Beginnings) related to the potential redevelopment possibilities of the former Brookside Youth Centre (BYC) facility located on King Street West in Cobourg. What I took away from the article was that it would be very costly for Town Council to purchase the BYC holdings and just as importantly to then re-develop the thirty-two acres of property including the custom refurbishment of the historical

buildings and demolition of the contemporary buildings on the property. As beautiful and strategically located as the BYC property is within our town, the wonderful and creative ideas expressed by several people clearly stated to me that the purchase and ultimate redevelopment (governed by site specific town by-laws and citizen approvals etc.) should be from the private sector and not through a town debenture to underwrite the expense of bringing the property to life as envisioned by spokespeople from the community and from the local Arts and Culture Community.

However, I did see some positive light after reading the article about several visions of our local Arts and Culture Community, that I feel might be able to be created as a shared Community Hub in the former Memorial Arena on Furnace Street. As Council is aware, the arena has been decommissioned for use as an ice arena but I envision, through the keen eyes of a creative architectural / engineering / arts and culture community coalition, that the currently owned town building could be purchased by the various entities of the Arts and Culture Community for the most nominal of expenditures (e.g., \$2.00) and be repurposed for the various expressed uses of the Arts and Culture Community. The Arts and Culture Community would collectively own their own hub. The Memorial Arena would live on as a continuing community asset for citizens and visitors to enjoy and the town would no longer have to maintain the year over year upkeep expenditures of the building. I would encourage Members of Council to investigate this proposal.

I also recently welcomed the opportunity to review the proposed 2022 town budget through the Engage Cobourg platform from the town's website and would like to share some thoughts. I will commence by clearly stating that I do **not** envy Deputy Mayor Sequin's role of Coordinator of General Government Services and the balance of council, but I do appreciate the line-by-line review of the annual operating and capital town budget by council and senior staff.

One thought for consideration of council is to remove the \$45,000.00 line item, for the repair of the New Amherst Clock Tower in the 2022 budget. I do not question the need for the repairs to the clock tower, but I was surprised to discover that the clock had been bequeathed to the ownership of the town and that all future maintenance expenses in perpetuity will fall upon all ratepayers throughout the entire town. It appears to me that the clock tower was initially included in the design / construction of the New Amherst residential development as a commercial sales promotion feature to market the ambiance of the development for potential purchasers of the developers' homes. It does **not** seem like an item that the Town Council of the day would have requested in a site plan agreement with the developer. The clock tower appears to have been an initial and subsequent positive ongoing benefit for the developing company and an ultimate ongoing negative expense for the general ratepayer.

I would encourage Members of Council to contact each person who owns property within the site-specific boundaries of the New Amherst housing and commercial development and ask them if they would support an additional, site-specific (TBD) levy on their individual, annual property tax invoice for the general maintenance and repair of the clock tower structure. I suggest that any benefit from the clock tower is received by the site-specific neighbourhood and does not benefit the community-at-large and thus should **not** become an annual expense for every ratepayer throughout the entire town.

I was heartened to read that Council had supported Option # 4 from the waterfront consultation and was moving forward with the plans to repair / replace the various inner harbour walls and accompanying lake break walls etc. I was however **shocked** to read that the sum of \$750,000.00 had been recommended for upgrades to the trailer park / campground located at the south-east terminus of Division Street for the consideration of Council, for the 2023 budget.

I feel that this extremely important and strategically located town owned property could offer the citizens of Cobourg a higher valued financial and citizen usage return by the opening of a waterfront boutique hotel and restaurant. The financial upside would come from either a long-term lease (50-75-100 year) arrangement or through the sale of the property to a private boutique hotelier.

I would suggest that all monies realized through the lease or sale process should be placed in a specifically created Cobourg Waterfront Community Endowment Fund via a very specifically worded by-law, which would be managed and strictly controlled by an appointed and varied board comprised of Cobourg only, citizens-at-large in perpetuity. The appointed members of the Cobourg Waterfront Community Endowment Fund would be legally intrusted to invest the financial proceeds and to disburse the annual **interest only** component of the Endowment Fund for projects that would enhance the public Waterfront assets. Future Town Councils would **not** have any control of the Endowment Fund or be able to dictate how the monies annual interest only and **not** the principal was expended. Future Town Councils would however be able to submit grant requests to the funds board of management, for the maintenance and development of current and future public, waterfront assets.

My sense is that there would be a spirited amount of commercial interest in the lease and/or purchase of the current trailer park property despite the fact that any lease / sale agreement would **explicitly** restrict development on the property, to the construction of a boutique hotel and accompanying waterfront restaurant only.

I envision that the vast majority of members of the Cobourg Downtown Business Improvement Area (DBIA) and Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce would welcome what I would describe as being an extremely

significant shopper / pedestrian driven **anchor destination** for citizens and visitors alike. It would be another key feature for people to be drawn to the downtown. Our overnight visitors would continue to experience the entire waterfront and provide extra **year-round** foot traffic throughout the entire downtown business core.

I would estimate that a potential boutique hotel and waterfront restaurant would create in the neighbourhood of fifty (50) to seventy-five (75) fulltime equivalent opportunities for citizen employment, on a year-round basis. I recognize that the current trailer park does provide a positive financial return to the town during the trailer park's five-month season, but I feel confident in suggesting that the annual property tax assessment received from the aforementioned commercial development of the property would recover any of the lost trailer park rental income for the town.

I will respectfully close by suggesting that the commercial development of the current trailer park with a boutique hotel and waterfront restaurant would provide a multitude of benefits for the citizens of Cobourg as opposed to providing a trailer park for a limited number of visitors, on a five-month basis, that creates minimal employment and provides limited opportunities for Cobourg citizens.

In Mayor Henderson's 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2021 column in the Northumberland News he described the many housing developments that are currently underway throughout the

west side of town and asked us to stay tuned for a follow-up article on the growth and development within the central core of Cobourg. I believe that my proposed waterfront boutique hotel and restaurant proposal would compliment the positive background work performed by the town's Planning and Development Employees and from the current and previous elected officials.

I thank you for the opportunity to share a few of my citizen thoughts, for your consideration.

With regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "S".

Ron Smith

CC: Tracey Vaughan – Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)  
Toni Galea – E.A. to the Mayor and CAO  
Cobourg Downtown Business Improvement Area  
Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce