

SUBMISSION TO COBOURG TOWN COUNCIL RE-THE

PURCHASE OF THE PARK THEATRE

PAUL WHITEHEAD MAY 19, 2015

Good evening Mayor Brocanier, Deputy Mayor Henderson and Town Councillors. Thank you for allowing me to address the council regarding the purchase of the Park Theatre.

My name is Paul Whitehead and have lived in Cobourg for 30 years. I have been employed in a Management roll at Kraft and later Weetabix for 22 years, where I managed the operation until 2010. I have been involved in Community service since 1989, first as treasurer of Ducks unlimited, then a member of the local Lions club that started the Cobourg waterfront festival and later President of the club in 1995. I have also been a member of the local Rotary club as well. I was one of the founding directors of the Northumberland Manufacturing Association. I believe in community and being a part of it.

I have thought it necessary to address the council this evening about the purchase of the Park theatre. This is the first time I have done so. I must say firstly, that I have not come to say I am against the idea. I have concerns that the unknowns are many. It is my opinion that we have come onto hard times in small town Ontario, as many of our manufacturing sector good paying jobs have left for good. the considerable work completed for the downtown revitalisation point to incomes in town and the demographics at work here.

I think every decision made at council level today, has to be made from sound objective principals and from sound information that has been gathered and scrutinised up front of the decision process.

I feel there are too many unknowns to make a decision to spend \$600 k at this time and some of these are:

1) Will the Park become a cultural centre or is it only going to be an old time theatre dressed up with modern amenities?

2)What revenue can be generated by the entertainment programming? What shortfall if any will be left?

3) Knowing the money that has been spent at the Capitol in Port Hope and the time it has taken to reach fruition, what guarantee is there to the town/taxpayers that sizeable funds can be raised to get the building into the expected condition that future consumers of the proposed program will want?

4) How many dollars will be required? This number will determine to some extent, the feasibility of meeting the goals to rebuild the theatre.

5) If the theatre fails, how much can it be realistically sold for, if it is in good repair?

6) How has it been determined that ACO/PTG is more deserving of funds than other heritage/cultural/ community worthy causes or the downtown revitalisation for that fact.

7) If this venue is to be a cultural anchor for the east end of town, currently what funds are being generated by existing cultural venues in town each year. What is our net after wages/benefits/expenses and why do we feel this will generate more or do we know? In other words," is it worth this kind of investment"?

8) Realizing that the property had to be kept secret for reasons we all understand, why was a cultural hub like this proposal and the funds required kept a secret? I have spoken with many folks in town that are a little surprised. They do not understand the Holdco connection or that there are funds available for that matter. Why is it that ratepayers don't understand this fund is available and how the funds are generated?

9) Did the April public priorities input to the strategic plan indicate that this type of project was high priority? It did not as far as could understand.

10) Why is this project being considered when I cannot see it as part of the strategic plan of the downtown revitalisation?

11) Why was this project not made public after the council governance/transparency training session as it was understood at that time that council will be transparent?

12) Understanding that Holdco funds are excess payments for water and sewer usage, how is it determined that rate payers support this use of funds? It has been publically stated that reserves are kept for repair/replacement of aging infra-structure, has it not?

13) With the number of unknowns and knowing that the board at Holdco are not theatre experts or are the members of CAO/PTG, what would make the rate payers think this is a wise use of funds.

14) What would make the rate payer think the investment is wise when the cost and master plan are not due until 6 months after the purchase is accepted?

15) What can the average Cobourg tax payer expect to see come out of this investment? Would you see the average taxpayer making use of, or be interested in such a venue or is it seen as another tax payer subsidized operation to attract visitors to support downtown

business? Why is there not a form of payback once up and running/successful in the form of rent or debt service?

16) What timeframe can we expect to see the benefits to the our downtown of a fully functioning theatre venue?

Summary

I have not come this evening to try and belittle the considerable efforts of our town council. I understand and appreciate the time that each of you spends in directing the future of this great little town that my family is pleased to call home. These are tough times and our downtown is showing the signs of change in small town Ontario. Objective decision making is founded on sound procurement and scrutiny of information much of which is lacking at this time. I can only suggest that we pull up and look hard before making a decision for/against purchasing the Part Theatre.

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