

5.7 (II)

June 26, 2017

To: Councillors of the City of Hamilton

From: Meg Young, Dundas

Re: The sale of the laneway running between Alma and Victoria parallel to Sydenham

I am puzzled by the City Report's recommending the sale of the laneway. The Report gives no reasons to sell the laneway, and does not acknowledge any of the arguments against selling it. I am mystified as to why the City would want to undermine a community for the benefit of one individual and his two neighbours.

The only explanation in the Report for selling the public land is that two neighbours are in agreement with its sale, and a third has no particular opinion. Of course the two neighbours are in agreement with the sale. The developer who has made application to purchase the laneway has paved his neighbours' sections of the laneway and built a nice fence with some attractive landscaping. Why wouldn't they be pleased? The laneway is easier to drive on and nobody can walk behind their houses. At last week's public meeting, Mr. Madeiros said he didn't want people walking behind his house. I would be delighted if this gentleman would move next to me on Old Ancaster Rd, which is very busy, build a fence across the road, install nice landscaping and stop all traffic in front of my house. Then I would not have to deal with cigarette butts and dog droppings. But I'm not entitled to stop traffic on my street. And individual citizens should not be entitled to appropriate public land, especially a 160-year-old public lane. This does not serve the public good.

Further, selling the land for \$2 is foolish. This developer/contractor is adding about 900-1000 sqft to his property. When he puts the house up for sale (he has recently sold the house he renovated across Victoria Street and he has purchased a house on Cross Street that he is currently renovating), he will make much more than his \$2 investment. What is the City getting out of this? A friend last week was telling me about her bargain – a box of Two-Bite Brownies for \$2 instead of \$4, and was pleased with herself. I told her that in comparison with Len Madeiros's 1000 sq feet of prime heritage land in downtown Dundas her Two-Bite Brownies were no bargain at all! Councillors, where is your business sense?

Because there are no reasons given in the report for selling the land, I am left guessing as to why the City of Hamilton would give away our public heritage.

Is the City afraid of liability, especially after Hamilton was hit with an \$8 million dollar lawsuit in November related to the school boy who was struck at a school crosswalk after the crossing guard had left early. As a tax payer, I appreciate your concern about this lawsuit. However, there is a school cross walk at the corner of Alma and Sydenham for students attending St. Augustine. Students who use the laneway should cross at the cross walk. If Len Madeiros had not applied to purchase the lane, would you still see the alley as a liability? I think this argument is specious. My understanding is that there are students who have just exited their parents' cars who run across the street. So the liability is still there.

I am concerned that you are planning to sell all the other unassumed laneways in the City. This compounds the short-sightedness. At least one presentation this morning will deal with the rejuvenation of laneways in major cities in North America. Laneways can be community builders.

In summary, the laneway running parallel to Sydenham has been a public laneway for 160 years. You are breaking an historic tradition. You are giving away public lands, willy-nilly, for \$2. You could create a public laneway movement as at least two speakers last week explained. You are being manipulated by an American-style fear of life and an anxious councillor's blowing the liability issue all out of proportion. Please do not sell this laneway to a developer for \$2.

Meg Young