
❖ Speaking Out ❖

Volume 1 Issue 11

The Truth is Mighty and Will Prevail

Land Deal Part Deux

In the Oct. 11 Packet Mayor Stevens is quoted "I welcome the police investigation. Maybe this will shut this guy up?" Well it seems the only people being shut up are the Mayor and councillors. I have heard absolutely nothing in explanation or reason for having made this Sweet Heart land deal. If anyone reading this has heard any explanation I sure would like to know. I did run into the Mayor at city hall on Fri. Oct. 17 and he did speak to me. His words and I quote "Your some piece of work, good luck". Now I took this as encouragement to keep trying to make sense of these deals. My life would be a lot easier if the Mayor and council would just explain themselves and that would be that. If there is a rational HONEST explanation I would be most happy to drop this and go on with my life.

In the absence of an explanation I have now in my possession documentation on another deal struck by the Mayor and council on this same piece of land same developer. Instead of answering my questions I now have even more, and would like to share this information.

An Agreement of Purchase and Sale was drawn up on May 16, 2002 (a few days after Roger Tudhope was gone) to buy the 12.5 acres for \$1,067,506.50. ("why would anyone include fifty cents in the offered price on a deal this size?"). That works out to \$84,803.50 per acre and includes bylaw 221 charges of \$20,000 per acre. The offer even though prepared in May was not signed until Aug. 30 but not approved by council until Oct. 7 after the gag on Roger Tudhope was in place. Now this deal was supposed to close on April 1, 2003 but was renegotiated in March (same developer) which now gave the \$50,000 per acre Development charge to the buyer.

So now lets re-cap. These people negotiated the selling price of the land to \$90,058.00 per acre (a \$5,254.50 increase) and gave back to the developer

renegotiated the selling price of the land to \$90,058.00 per acre (a \$5,254.50 increase) and gave the developer \$50,000 per acre Development charges. Folks that comes to a staggering \$563,256.35 windfall for the buyer whom we already had a deal with. Plus the closing date was extended till Oct. 2004 so the developer still has not paid for the land. Wonder who thought this deal up? Obviously Santa Clause came early last March. Any wonder the Development Reserve Fund is in trouble?



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Maurice McMillan

I met Maurice in April of 2002 at the Kewadin Inn where he was hosting a meeting to try and stop the sale of Hydro One and the deregulation of Hydro. I had read a few items about this maverick energy worker so I decided to attend. There were only about forty people who showed up but Maurice was undeterred. He believed then as he does now that private power is wrong. Ever being persecuted by his employer for his opposition to privatization, he was suspended, demoted, ridiculed etc. This guy has never wavered regardless of how much pressure was put on him. He has been honest and diligent in his quest to have the right thing done.

So here is Maurice running for Mayor. Some people have said "but he has no experience". Bull! Maurice has stood up to Ernie Eves, Garfield Dunlop, John Mattinson, OPC board of directors, Mayor Stevens and Council. He has experience and the scars to prove it. We need an honest, strong person in the Mayors chair who has proven that he cares for the electorate and not big business, provincial politicians or special interests. Seems to me this guy will put our interests first regardless of how much pressure will be applied. I would rather have an honest man with principals and integrity with little political experience, but willing to learn than a seasoned politician???. Orillia needs a man like Maurice who can not be compromised into doing the wrong thing.

I will be casting my vote for Maurice and urge everyone to support him. We need to elect people who will follow the Peoples Interest not Special Interest. We also need a council made up of independent, thoughtful, strong willed people to clean up the way city business is conducted. If you want change then change the incumbents. Please Vote.

Downtown Orillia

I got a call from Mike Tucker of the Home Building Center. I have met Mike before and I can honestly say he seems to be a very knowledgeable and astute person. Mike called because he wanted to let me know that he disagreed with my article on where to place the Rec. Center. As you know I support the building of the Center but not at forty seven million dollars. I also do not support trucking the contaminated soil to our lake side dump. Mike feels that the future of the downtown depends on projects like this but I disagree with that reasoning.

First Mike admitted that Molson wanted to build on the property but found it uneconomical for the very reason that the Rec Center does not make sense. If it does not make sense to build a for profit establishment on the property it certainly does not make sense to saddle the tax payer with a not for profit Rec Center. So what about the future of the downtown? It is very simple and should not cost us any cash.

Let's face it if you take a walk around the south side of Colborne St. you will find old decaying houses really not kept up. Now not all places are like this but the majority are. It is time to re-develop these streets. City Hall must make it attractive for developers to buy up these places and build new but affordable housing. Because services are already in place and allowing high density smaller units to be built costs can be kept down. Now I propose that townhomes from 600 to a maximum of 1000 sq. ft. or condominiums from 400 to 800 sq. ft be built. In reality there is enough space to house a 1000 maybe 1500 people right around the downtown. Now these people are the future. There are hundreds of thousands of people who want to own their own affordable housing or rent decent accommodation. Most developers want to build 2 to 3 thousand sq. ft. homes to maximize profit. They completely ignore the other larger market. As the population ages need for housing size decreases. That is why as soon as a 1000 sq. ft. bungalow comes on the market it is snapped up. What better place for people to live than walking

distance to stores, doctors, hospital, restaurants etc. With a built in customer base our downtown would prosper and even grow,

The way to start downtown redevelopment is to bring our public transit system into the 21st. century. In a city the size of Orillia with good reliable public transit cars could be left at home. With 15 to 20 minute service public transit would make sense to the majority of people. Why if we could get just 200 downtown workers to leave their cars at home we could develop a couple of parking lots into commercial and housing space generating tax revenue. Air quality would go up, traffic congestion alleviated and maybe these workers instead of jumping in their cars and going home just might walk around discovering their downtown as they walk to the bus stop. A people friendly community meeting place is what we could create. So how long would this take? With vision and good will I figure 5 to 7 years you would not recognize this area.

The Tudhope block is also an integral part of this renewal. I believe that if the current owner won't develop then we either find someone else or the city do it. We want a new library so why not house it there. Along with housing and possibly some commercial this block would rock. Truly a City Center.

So what about the Molson property? Well we could put some recreational amenities there but my choice would be to turn it into a downtown nature park. This former bog can be restored for our future generations. The street side of the property could be developed into the new Orillia Farmers Market. Let's face it the success of the present farmers market is actually holding it's growth back. Parking is a huge problem and many people who would have attended drive by due to lack of parking. This market could expand at the Molson property and prosper. Why we could even expand the market into a summer flea market drawing thousands of people every weekend complimenting the market. So is all this possible? With vision and goodwill YES.

What about the police and fire dept.? Why don't we look to the old Canadian Tire building as a possible combination police and fire station. West St. is an ideal location. I am sure Canadian Tire would love to unload this building. It must be costing them hundreds of thousands every year with heat, taxes and upkeep. If a second story could be added to this structure we would have space for future expansion. Let's use what is already in place, it is bound to be more cost effective. As for the present police station I'm sure it could be turned into some of that living space I talked about earlier. It is a nice building in a perfect location.

With the A&P building sold let's encourage the owners to develop the property. We need to sit down with them and find out what their plans are and help them expedite it. Wouldn't it be great to have this prime space used again? The opportunities for renewal are endless. All we need is the will to make it work. But always keeping in mind that people needs must come first.

So Mike if you are convinced that we can afford forty seven million dollars let's do this. Build the MURF at Westridge for twenty million and spend the remaining twenty seven million to revitalize the downtown. Two bangs for the same dollar. Jim Tolnai

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