

Submission to Guelph City Council re proposed Parkview Motel conversion

Clyde R. Bond

October 22, 2020

Council and Mr. Guthrie:

I am presenting this submission in my personal capacity for your consideration, in the hopes that you will understand my concerns and I dare say a large number of the area resident's concerns (the neighbourhood community) to the proposed Parkview conversion proposal (the proposal).

My submission will be broken into 4 parts.

1. A brief history of the process of the proposal
2. Financial issues – request to provide \$540,000 to assist in the purchase of the Parkview Motel
3. Bylaw Zoning
4. Lack of community engagement by the Welcome Drop in Center

1. Brief History of the process of the proposal

The first-time residents of the neighbourhood community became aware of the proposal was in the media on August 25, 2020. Apparently during delegations relating to the funding request of St. Joseph for senior's affordable housing on August 24 before council, the Executive Director of the Welcome Drop In Center (the Center) Gail Hoekstra spoke in respect of the funding request but then added that the Center had entered into a non-competitive offer agreement with the owners of the Parkview Motel (Parkview) to purchase the property for \$3.8 million. She then told council that the Center needed a 30% down payment to purchase; the Centre had some funds but required an additional \$540,000 and she was asking the City to provide that.

This topic was not on the agenda and there was no notice given that it was to be raised or discussed. The 2 councillors for Ward 2, Rodrigo Goller and James Gordon have clearly stated that this was the first time they had heard of this. It would appear however that at least Mr. Guthrie was aware by his very reaction as reported and as evidenced in the video of the meeting. Mr. Guthrie and at least 2 other councillors immediately endorsed the request and made public statements then and there that illustrated that without any study or important and relevant information about the proposal and the request, they were prepared to give the money. The Council then voted to have the request referred to City employees to study the proposal and report back to Council. That is what has taken place.

The Report was to be released on October 9, 2020 but wasn't until October 15. That provided the community with 7 days to review it and to provide their input.

There are 3 major issues with this process, that I must say has myself and a significant number of residents of the neighbourhood community feeling as if the process has been unfair.

1. Those who wish to make presentations as delegates for this matter on October 26, 2020 have been told by a councillor that their presentations must only deal with the contents of the Report (Funding and possibly the MZO) and no other matters related to the proposal.

Query: how was it that Gail Hoekstra was able to veer off to another entirely separate matter without notice to Council and have Council deal with it in such a speedy and what would appear to be an unusual manner.

2. The comments of Mr. Guthrie and the other 2 councillors suggest that they have an immediate bias and would be unable to exercise objectivity in their decision making, once they have the relevant information. In particular Mr. Guthrie has clearly shown by his statements that he is biased; at the council meeting of August 24; in a You Tube Video posted September 2, 2020 and then at the virtual town hall on September 17, 2020. Objectivity and fairness is the cornerstone of a democratic and transparent process. These 3 persons should not be involved in any decision making related to the proposal as they have demonstrated they simply are not able to be objective.
3. The time period from the release of the Report to the deadline for input is 7 days. This is insufficient time for a large number of the residents to digest the Report's details. The shortened time period is unfair.

Based on the above, there is little wonder that a large number of residents of the neighbourhood community are troubled by this process and the appearance of unfairness or a lack of consideration for their concerns and interests.

1. Financial Issues

The Center requests \$540,000 which would be 50% of the required down payment. The other amount was given to the Center by a benefactor.

There are a number of questions related to the request and the Report.

1. The request is for 50% of the down payment. The purported requesting price of the owners of the Parkview is \$3.8 million. There is no information about the real market value of the property. Gail Hoekstra has been asked at the town hall and in emails about that and she has responded as follows:

- Townhall – well that’s what they want for it
- Emails – no response

If the valuation is less than \$3.8 million then the request based on 50% of the down payment would be less, yet the City has no idea and the Report is based on the original requested amount. Why would the City entertain providing more money than if they have no idea of the value of the property? There is no certainty about the property value.

The Report suggests that Council could give consideration to a lesser amount - \$475,000. What is that based on – the Report does not explain how they came to that number except that by a simple mathematic calculation they apportioned the requested monies amongst the requesters. That is not a rational approach to the spending of taxpayer’s money.

2. The Report clearly identifies that unlike other project proposals that have come before council, this proposal has not reached out to any other possible sources of funding: senior levels of government, (except for the County of Wellington which denied the request because they did not have available funds); private sources and has not engaged in any fundraising activities that we are aware of. Why would Council consider approving \$475,000 when the Center has made no efforts to access other monies such that the amount the City may provide would be less?
3. The Report states that the Center owns 3 properties. There is no indication that the Center is prepared to leverage those properties to contribute in any way to the proposal’s funding.
4. The Report clearly identifies that the proposal is under- developed, and details are scarce. The proposal is perhaps on a scale of 1-10 at a 2 versus other proposals that are far along the road; they have secured funding from other sources; they have solid development plans and they have engaged or are developing community engagement plans. None of that is in place with this proposal.
5. As reported in Guelph Today on October 19, 2020 the City has provided a total of \$1.164 million to St Joseph’s for 143 units dedicated to senior’s affordable housing or \$8140.00 per unit. The Center’s request at \$540,000 for 36 units amounts to \$15,000 per unit and at \$475,000 amounts to \$13,194.00 per unit. That by far exceeds the grant to St Joseph’s for a newly constructed facility. On what basis can that disparity be justified.
6. As reported in the Report at page 4, the Letter of intent for non -competitive purchase expired on October 14, 2020. No information has been provided that that has been extended or renewed. If it has not, then any consideration of funding is moot as the proposal would appear to have expired or be dead.
7. The Report mentions a number of times throughout that the City faces “significant financial risk providing a grant in advance of the project meeting certain

development stage milestones”. Bluntly put, the proposal is at an infancy stage and the City ought not to commit any funds at this time. By offering a Letter of Commitment those funds would be tied up and not be available for other projects that are far further along in the development stages.

8. If approved and the proposal came to fruition- would the Center pay property taxes, or would they also seek additional funds from the City by means of a tax exemption. That would increase the City contribution significantly, so the requested amount is actually much higher.
9. The Report provides options to the City. They would appear to be:
 - a. reject the proposal at this time and advise the Center to make a request for funds if and when the proposal is more fully developed
 - b. enter into a Letter of Commitment – committing the City, with conditions to providing the funding. For the numerous reasons above I am of the view it is irresponsible to enter into such a Letter at this stage. The fund is already in a deficit and as per the Report if funding was provided to all of the requesters the fund would be fully expended for 2021 and into 2022. This proposal simply does not fulfill rudimentary basics of a defined and developed proposal to justify any money being set aside and dedicated to it.

2. **Bylaw issues:**

Mr. Guthrie has at least twice in public forums (the You Tube video and the town hall) made it known that he would be prepared to seek a Ministerial Zoning Order bypassing the usual, normal and appropriate bylaw zoning process that all other projects in Guelph are subject to. That would eliminate again, fairness in the process by removing the ability of the neighbourhood community to participate in an open conversation about the appropriateness of the proposed land use for the proposal.

In an email/submission by Marco Del Rosario dated October 21, 2020 to Council he succinctly and clearly points out that Official Plan Amendment #69 was a thorough commercial policy review of the intensification corridor of Woolwich St. The plan was officially endorsed by this Council on January 28, 2020. Mr. Del Rosario sets out the criteria that Council endorsed after much study. Why would Council consider a piecemeal amendment to a fulsome development plan? If Council was seriously considering that, then surely the neighbourhood community and others should be able to be involved in the discussions before such a radical departure were to be approved.

Obviating that process as suggested by Mr. Guthrie makes a mockery of the hard work and detailed considerations that obviously went into the Plan and in fact is a reversal by Council with little to no discussion. Council should overwhelmingly reject such an approach. It is simply not democratic. There is no due process afforded to the citizens of Guelph.

3. Lack of community engagement by the Welcome Drop in Center

While this subject is not directly relevant to the financial or bylaw considerations at this stage, Council should be aware that the Center has, unlike other projects as stated in the Report, not engaged the neighbourhood community in any meaningful manner. Repeated requests for information have been met with simple one liners such as “This will be permanent supportive housing” and “there will be 24/7 support – there will be someone on site”. When more specific questions have been asked, they have either been unanswered or deflected. I have provided the 3 email exchanges with Ms. Hoekstra along with this submission. All of my exchanges were in the spirit of trying to understand what the proposal is all about, the Center’s plans, how they would structure the facility, who would be the residents and the like. Instead of a reasonable response Ms. Hoekstra suggested that those who opposed the proposal may be considered to be discriminatory under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Engagement with the neighbourhood community at the outset and continuing to today has been woeful. All the published studies I have seen make it quite clear that community engagement is crucial to obtain buy-in for these types of projects. The position of the Center has been that if people have questions, they can contact Ms. Hoekstra. Interestingly it is the Center that possesses all of the information, yet they do not see it as an appropriate approach to share that with the neighbourhood community except and unless people reach out to them.

How could it ever be expected that the neighbourhood community would support the proposal in the absence of even basic information? To the same extent, the Report identifies the serious lack of information that has been provided.

Why is that; because the proposal is clearly undeveloped in the very basics.

I strongly urge Council to reject any funding for the proposal at this time. Perhaps with a more defined plan, with more information and specifics, Council may give consideration to a new request, but to commit taxpayer’s money to this proposal at this time would be inappropriate.

Thank you

From: Clyde Bond [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Parkview Motel Conversion
Date: October 12, 2020 at 10:10 PM
To: Gail Hoekstra [REDACTED]



Good day Ms Hoekstra. I hope you had a nice Thanksgiving weekend. I am sorry we have not been able to connect via phone; clearly we are both very busy with work and personal lives. I thought it might be better and easier if I reduced the questions I have in an email to you so that you can reply that way, when you have the time.

I am hoping that the information you provide can be something I can share with the people I know in the neighbourhood who still have many questions and concerns. In that way I can serve two purposes; 1. to answer my questions and help me to be able to decide if I can support the Welcome Drop In Center proposal and 2. as I said, to disseminate the information to the neighbourhood community.

I have broken the questions into topics. Thank you in advance for your responses. I am sure you will answer the questions as fully as you are able.

Funding:

1. Who is actually the purchaser and who will be the legal owner?
2. How will the facility be funded on an ongoing basis to pay such things as the mortgage, the overhead costs like maintenance, employees/workers salaries etc.
3. What happens to the facility if you can't pay the bills
4. Would the facility pay property taxes to the city
5. Will the city have any stake in the property and be able to recoup their money if this fails or is it proposed to be a one time grant/gift
6. Valuation – who did it and what the valuation
7. You are asking the city to pay 50% of the down payment which is approximately 570,000. Have you approached any other possible sources for funds aside from the County such as corporations, other levels of government, charities, benevolent societies or is the city the first ask?
8. Will the residents pay any rental for the unit? If so what would that be based on.

Facility set up – physical

1. Currently the physical set up does not permit for control of people coming and going to the rooms – will this change and if so – how.
2. No rooms have kitchens – where will the tenants obtain meals – the communal kitchen or otherwise
3. What specific plans are there for the rooms and the common area and the property itself and the timelines for those plans

Rules

1. Will there be rules and guidelines regarding conduct; for example - how many people in a room;
2. What controls will there be to prevent out of control parties and accumulations of people
3. What about illegal drug use on premise - will that be prohibited or permitted. If someone is

using illegal drugs what will the consequences be regarding their residency

4. Will there be consequences such as removal for breaking the rules – who will do that and after how many infractions

5. Will there be a noise rule – like no excessive noise after say 11 pm or before 700 am and if so who will enforce that

Employees

1. Who and how many will be supervising at any given time and what will their qualifications be

2. What authority will they have to manage misconduct

3. You refer to permanent supportive housing – what does that mean specifically and how often will supports be present and engaging the residents

Tenants

1. How will you pick the tenants – on what basis and what mix of male and female or family will there be

2. Will the tenants sign lease agreements that contain rules that they must abide by - so there is a contract of sorts

On Sep 25, 2020, at 1:22 PM, Gail Hoekstra [REDACTED] wrote:

Hi Clyde

I am trying my best to have conversations with any neighbours that are reaching out.

There are many people that are interested in this potential project and are excited to be part of it if it comes to be and the bridges are being built.

There are also individuals that are clearly opposed to this project and have sent me emails to tell me this directly and despite any conversations we have had they are not interested in supporting this project.

Just so I am clear- what information do you exactly want to know about this proposed project that I have not shared already and would be helpful for you to know?

I would love to answer these questions the best I can.

Have a great weekend as well!

Gail

I

On Sep 25, 2020, at 10:48 AM, clyde bond [REDACTED] wrote:

Good day Ms Hoekstra, I would be happy to chat with you next week if you like via phone.

I must admit however that I had to read my email that I sent to you a number of times to try to understand how I was not clear in my meaning and intent.

Your reply confuses me. What I was intending to convey was the fact that the Drop In Center and the Board has failed to engage the community from the outset about the overall proposal and also to provide details of the proposal. I was asking The Drop In Center to start neighbourhood community outreach as soon as possible and I was suggesting the areas that people are very interested in.

Perhaps I am wrong and perhaps another person reading your reply might think that by referring to discrimination under the Ontario legislation you are suggesting that the concerns of this neighbourhood community could be considered to be discriminatory.

If I am wrong I apologize but if I am correct, that kind of analogy will do nothing to build bridges. By inferring to that or by referring to the neighbourhood community with labels like "NIMBYS", (which occurred at the Town Hall) that will do nothing but alienate. I

for one, abhor labels. To suggest homeless = mentally ill or drug addict is but an example of bad labels on the other end of the debate. I know you are very strongly opposed to such labels. I would hope that you would also be opposed to the labels I have referred to.

I truly hope that you and the Drop In Center Board want to engage the neighbourhood community moving forward. I appreciate the information you provided about the proposal. I am sure there is a lot more detail and information that could be provided. That is a good start - but not just to me in this email but to the neighbourhood community as a whole. I made suggestions on how to accomplish that as well. I am sure there are many other ways.

If the Drop In Center, you and the Board have an interest to reduce opposition and address the concerns of the neighbourhood community, those concerns have to be addressed head on. I would venture to say that failure to do that as soon as possible will likely result in a much more rancorous process for all parties.

More importantly - if the proposal was to be successful, wouldn't it be to everyone's advantage to have developed - as best as possible - a more positive relationship. I believe that failure to do that may result, unfortunately, in a very active neighbourhood community that will place the proposal under a microscope at every turn of the road. That would truly not be good for anyone.

As I say, I would be happy to chat with you about ways the Drop In Center, you and the Board can reach out to the neighbourhood community. Perhaps it might be a good idea to engage Ms Crowder as well, as she clearly recognized at the Town Hall, the need to engage the neighbourhood community and she may have some very good ideas how to do that.

I hope you have a nice weekend and I look forward to further conversation either via email or by phone next week.

Clyde Bond

On Sep 23, 2020, at 7:34 PM, Gail Hoekstra <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Thank you Clyde for your input. I appreciate it.

In response to your comments.

1) I agree there are 3 camps and I have heard from all of these camps.

2) Impact on community

a) I know the individuals in the community that are homeless and would benefit from this project. I really did not understand that there was an expectation that these Guelph citizens have to be given the permission to be housed. In fact at times it can be a discriminatory process falling under the Ontario Human Rights Commission. As See link below.

<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/zone-housing-human-rights-and-municipal-planning/overcoming-opposition-affordable-housing>

b) Also- The Parkview has a very unstable use at this point with many types of individuals coming through this site. I really feel this is a more stable use of the site with staff support to support success for the individuals there which would compliment the community.

Details of Project

a) 36 individuals selected that are coming out of homelessness and are well known to service providers and are interested in support

b) The Drop In Centre will run this program (we have run shelters and worked with this population since 1986 and have a great understanding of this work)

c) This project would be well supported by Health Agencies and we work closely with the Guelph Community Health Centre; Canadian Mental Health Association and the Stonehenge Therapeutic Community

d) We would renovate the units and building to improve the site and create a community space at the front for the residents and staff.

I will send another link with some research about these type of projects in case you are interested.

<We Are Neighbours.pdf>

Let me know if you want to connect over phone or by zoom.

Thank you

Gail

On Sep 22, 2020, at 5:46 PM, Clyde Bond [REDACTED] wrote:

Good day Ms Hoekstra. I am very sorry for what apparently occurred yesterday. I do not condone nor will I condone inappropriate comments or conduct.

I am writing to you in personal capacity only. I find myself in an awkward position - I have met you at a function a few years ago and chatted and I have donated to the Drop In Center in the past. It does great work and I am a full supporter. I am very aware of the issues regarding homelessness and what is often a never ending circle of difficulties that are faced ranging from individual or a combination of mental health, physical health, drug and alcohol abuse issues and often a familial history of neglect and abuse, as well as peer group dynamics. Any steps that can be taken to assist in ending that circle and making life healthier and better is welcome. You should know that in any conversation I have had with the residents of the area, not one person has said they were opposed to addressing homelessness. All are in favour of providing the basics of life to those less fortunate.

As I have considered the proposal and your comments at the Town Hall I have come to realize that there are likely 3 groups of people involved.

1. The first group wholeheartedly supports the proposal. What they see is the potential for providing housing. That is admirable but just like the group at the other end of the spectrum it appears to fail to consider other positions. It ignores the concerns of the community. Those concerns are valid in my view.
2. The second group falls in the middle area - they may be opposed or in favour - they are more than likely either not wanting to get involved or they are wanting more details and information. This is probably the largest group.
3. The third group is adamantly opposed and it is unlikely that just as with the first group, their positions will change and they likely will fail to agree that the proposal may benefit the community.

My biggest issue with the proposal and in fact the process that has begun is the failure of the Drop In Center to recognize the possible impact on the neighbourhood community at the very beginning and to reach out to engage the community. I think if you were to review the studies on projects similar to this one, and as Adrienne Crowder so succinctly stated - "change can be difficult and scary for people". All the studies emphasize early and transparent interaction with the community for success. It is my humble view that the Drop In Center has dropped the ball by failing to reach out early. The August 24 council meeting, when it became known to the public in a real sense, created significant anxiety and fear for the unknown. It sounded like the Parkview was going to be simply a warehousing facility. Your brief comments at that meeting as reported in the media did one thing, I am sure unintentionally; they fostered that atmosphere.

I have heard that time and time again from people in the area that there is a real need to know the details about the proposal. Such things as how the project would operate, who would be living there and how would they be chosen, what supervision/control would there be and how many people in a room, how would there be controls over multiple people couch surfing in the rooms etc.. The physical plans are also important - is this simply going to be the Parkview but under a different title called supportive housing. If not, what renovations are planned, landscaping and perhaps a fence. These are important details.

The neighbourhood community would by no means have a veto over the plans but perhaps they could be engaged in a real way. Listen to their thoughts and ideas and concerns and respond with real hard facts. Provide a detailed fact sheet explaining and asking for input. I know that plans can be modified as circumstances require and people have to understand that but give them something tangible. You said during the Town Hall 2 things that struck me and some of the less strident opponents of the proposal in a not so welcoming way; "I didn't think I had to ask permission" in reference to the Parkview proposal - I agree, but the context in which that statement was made left a bitter taste; perhaps suggesting that the neighbouring community was not of importance. You also said that the community had to just "trust you". Given the lack of engagement and details to date I doubt that statement garnered much confidence in the audience. Trust, as you know is built. Again and not wanting to be repetitive but this bears repeating, if you want the community to have trust in the Drop In Center and the people involved, that needs to be built. I would ask if you can see your way to start actively engaging the community as soon as possible to clear up misunderstandings, misconceptions and address fears. I don't think it is too late.

I hope you take my comments in the manner in which they are meant - as constructive, thoughtful observations and suggestions.

I would be happy to chat with you over the phone if you care to as well.

Clyde Bond
[REDACTED]

On Sep 22, 2020, at 3:27 PM, Gail Hoekstra [REDACTED] wrote: