

September 23rd, 2008

Dear Pier Group members

We had a very successful display at the Fall Fair earlier this month. Thanks to Michael Wallace, Gray Abraham, Mell Chapple, Frances Clancy and others for putting it together, and many thanks to the new members who signed up at the Fair. The following is a recap of our issues for the newer members, so there might be a bit of repetition for our 'veteran' members.

- The land is owned by the Harbour Commission and leased to Cameco.
- The land and buildings will be cleaned up of both radioactive and old industrial pollution, with the buildings still standing. The Harbour Commission has then ordered Cameco to demolish the 'clean' buildings before the lease expires and the site is returned to the municipality.
- The mayor claims that this plan is a 'consistent vision' of council. While it's true that the town has planned on demolishing the building for years, it's also true that the new Official Plan designates the Pier as 'Central Commercial', the same designation as the Walton Street commercial district. How is this consistent?
- We have been told that the plans to demolish the Pier Buildings are the result of years of public input. We disagree. We have a membership of 250 who wish to see the buildings studied, have consideration given to other options, and make an informed, educated decision. We know of a grand total of 8 people that wish to see them demolished. That's 30 to 1 odds in favour of keeping the buildings or at least determining their viability. How can any effort at measuring public opinion get it so wrong?
- The Harbour Commission is made up of all members of Council, plus 2 citizen members. We have been told it is a private corporation owned by the Municipality of Port Hope. That it owns all of the waterfront lands, has the sole right to make all decisions regarding the waterfront lands, and insists on the right to conduct all of its business in private. How can this be right?
- We appeared at a recent Harbour Commission meeting, with a list of information that we as citizens of Port Hope felt that we were entitled to. Our deputation was met with dead silence, followed up by a few crumbs of obsolete information.

So what's next on our agenda?

- We have a couple of very helpful lawyers within our ranks. Thank you to them for everything they have found out so far and their continued efforts.
- They are studying the status of the Harbour Commission's privacy policies. The HC holds the land in trust for the people of Port Hope, not for their corporate owners (who happen to be themselves). Their privacy policy is quite possibly illegal, although I'm sure that their members would disagree. It is certainly unethical for a mayor and council who have declared publically that their mandate is governing in an 'honest, open, transparent and accountable manor'.
- We plan to stage two major events this fall. We'll let you know as soon as the dates and agendas are firmed up.
 - We will be sending a deputation to council, where we will be presenting our concerns, hopefully in front of you, our members, as well as the media. It's time to turn up the heat a bit.
 - We will also be holding a major public meeting, inviting all of Port Hope to hear the positive side of the Pier restoration possibilities, and to see other examples of 'brownfield' sites around Ontario and around the world. Most were polluted, most were considered derelict eyesores, and now they are the vibrant heart of their communities.
- We will be making a presentation to the East Durham Historical Society on Oct 22nd here in Port Hope. The public is welcome to attend.
- We're continuing our research into the environmental cleanup of the Port Hope Harbour area. The more we learn, the more convinced we are that the Harbour Commission is simply not current when it claims that keeping the buildings would be detrimental to cleaning up the harbour. The HC has a very different view based on a lot of old and outdated assumptions and general prejudices about old industrial buildings.
- I know that we sound a bit negative in much of this, and the municipality has given us little cause for optimism. We are talking to many members of Council and town committees, one-on-one, to see if we can soften up the bureaucratic armour. We'll play hardball if we have to, but we'd far rather achieve something great for our waterfront on a cooperative, not an adversarial basis.

- We would like to keep the pressure and awareness in front of the general population. We encourage all members to write letters to council and/or letters to the editor of the local newspapers, express your own opinions and views. If the papers are overwhelmed with letters, all the better.
- We have contacted Phoenix Community Works Foundation and have accepted their sponsorship of our project. What this means is, they will be able to receive donations and grants on our behalf, and issue tax receipts.

Some interesting things we have learned about the history of the Pier:

1. The evolution of the industrial activities on the pier includes the participation of a strapping young man, Newspaper Baron Lord Beaverbrook.
2. Have you ever noticed the wide gap in the Grand Trunk viaduct well west of Hayward Street? That's the river course when the viaduct was planned. The river was later (1847) re-channeled to its present location where the viaduct has a second extra wide opening.
3. The reason the yacht club / turning basin is where it is is that that location was a swamp at the edge of the lake and was therefore the easiest place to excavate for a harbour.
4. The harbour and industrial activity surrounding it are from the earliest days a pivotal story in the development of Port Hope. With the Town's new commitment to redevelopment of the waterfront for recreational purposes, why not enlighten some of the decisions with intelligent references to the industrial past that makes it all possible.

Cheers

Chris Wallace and Rod Stewart, co-chairs, The Pier Group