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December 18, 2020

Attn: BMAHC Board Chair R. Sampson, Mayor and Council

Re: Attainable Housing Initiative

Dear Sir:

Thank you for your response to my letter of Sept. 14th but I find your answers without substance and that only increases my reservations with this project. I found both your comments and the Mayor's responses to the 2018 BMVA's pre-election mayoral candidates survey quite telling and explains Council's support for many of the current issues facing the Town and in particular the Attainable Housing project.

I question the Mayor's willingness to support and strengthen the partnership between the Town and the tourism/service sector especially when he acknowledges that much must be done to promote the benefits this sector provides to the liveability of the Town.

I agree the tourism sector is a major local employer and a strong reliable labour force is vital to the success of any business. The Town contends attainable housing is the solution to worker shortage. I strenuously disagree with this assertion. The initiative is focused on two primary objectives. One, to provide rental assistance to seniors and tourism/service workers. I can see the merit but at the same time this only enables the sector to continue the exploitation of these workers. The second objective will fail to attract workers and encourage young families to settle in the Town. People will not be attracted to this area simply because this sector does not offer financial stability, job security or opportunities for future success.

If the BMVA believes attainable housing is the solution to the labour shortage, why has it not pursued this initiative and built their own facility years ago? Possibly, the BMVA realizes this is only a partial answer and the initiative alone presents an unacceptable financial risk. This project is nothing more than a ploy by the business sector and Council to subsidize corporate profits and satisfy private sector investor's expectations and to advance political ambitions.

Furthermore, as you and the Mayor are advocates for the tourism sector, do you agree that clogged highways, crowded beaches, loss of privacy, increased refuse collection and bylaw enforcement costs are all positive contributions to the Town's liveability? The public regards our natural environment as something to be preserved, the private sector regards it as something to be exploited.

In the year of Covid, the Mayor's unwavering support of this sector is made even more apparent by putting the interests of the business community before the health of the residents by continually promoting tourism in the area. How does encouraging a continual influx of tourists from other areas, especially the GTA where infections and death rates continue to increase have a positive affect on the liveability of the residents? Obviously corporate greed is more important than protecting our quality of life and our lives?

In conclusion, although I support any project that enhances quality of life for residents, I believe this project as it stands is drawing a line in the sand between residents and Council. This partnership and the dismissive attitude Council and some staff display towards residents questioning the validity of this and other projects is only widening the rift. This exemplifies our Council's dedication to supporting and facilitating any initiative that promotes aggressive tourism. Also, with Council's support of contentious developments that threaten both our natural environment and the character of our neighbourhoods suggests a willingness to partner with the development sector as well. Are any members of Council interested in a partnership with the residents?

I also question the wisdom and common sense with the current site selection. The site may pass the "smell test" in the spring but the stink from this project will always be with us. This is just another example of the mis-steps this Council continues to make. This will ultimately accelerate the degradation of our precious environment, our community and has the potential to negatively impact the financial stability of the Town and its residents for many, many years. I have lost confidence and trust in this Council and more specifically yourself and our Mayor.

I suggest the Town and County consider offering conditional tax incentives to encourage the BMVA to finance and build a facility designed to meet their needs. This will eliminate financial risk to the tax-payer. The Town over time will be able to determine the success of the initiative. Obviously, if the BMVA declines the offer, it would support my hypothesis that the sector is unwilling to accept the financial commitment and risks.

Interesting how pressure from the business sector can denigrate good intentions and I quote from BMVA survey where the Mayor states, "Two main parts of my platform are rebuilding trust and restoring responsible government. We can take concrete steps in these areas by going out and meeting people and listening to them."

Given the uncertainty in our current economy, it is imprudent and irresponsible for Council to commit financial resources to any project other than infrastructure until the economy stabilizes and the true focus of this project is redefined.

Respectfully

Rick Tipping