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Dean Hickey

-THE FUTURE OF THE OSHAWA MARINA- A LOOK AT OSHAWA'S PORT LANDS

By Dean Hickey

The Oshawa marina was deemed too expensive to operate and officially closed more than 20 years ago after having been offered to the City for the staggering sum of one dollar. Today the once-busy location is a sorry reminder of neglect, political infighting, and federal governments that long ago turned off the funding tap for recreation along the shores of Lake Ontario. As Mother Nature slowly seals the fate of the 240 berth marina with sand and silt from the Oshawa Creek, one man has come forward with a plan to reap the benefits of sport fishing and tourism that used to enjoy local access to Lake Ontario.

Oshawa resident Doug Sanders, who has been a member of City and Regional council, submitted a request to work with city hall at finding ways to establish what he sees as a much needed boat launch, possibly at the west end of Lakeview Park. He reminded councillors of efforts made some years ago to acquire proposals that would see a new marina operator, suggesting that "Many residents must now go into neighbouring municipalities to store their boats, watch boats, or go fishing."

Sanders recognizes the likely push-back from a Port Authority that sees the harbour as a place for shipping vessels only, and suggests a move to the western half of Lakeview Park may be the best option, beginning with a boat launch and moving towards an operating marina. All of which would be far removed from the industrial use that now dominates the East Harbour lands. "I spoke with the mayor about it, and we agreed it costs nothing to put out a request for proposals" he said.

Former Oshawa mayor John Gray, now a city councillor for Ward 5 which includes the waterfront, also sees room for a boat launch but questions the viability of restoring the existing marina. "The new Port Authority is definitely a pleasure to work with and they're good operators of the harbour, however the costs to restore the old marina are likely insurmountable." He agrees the most practical location for any future boat launch is still within the harbour, however the conflict between pleasure craft and container ships using what will soon be an expanded port is a matter for concern. "The process of establishing agreements with the Port Authority and navigating through environmental laws would be a challenge, although the need does exist for boaters to enjoy local access."

Others that I reached out to were less than sanguine as to the potential for a future marina anywhere along Oshawa's waterfront, with one Regional councillor suggesting the number of users would be much less than anticipated, telling me the costs of boating have only skyrocketed in recent years. Concerns were also raised as to the existing parkland and trails that would be disturbed by any alterations at the west end of Lakeview Park.

Overall, it's not difficult to see the improvements that have already been made since the days when Oshawa's share of the waterfront was minimal. Today, all of the parks, natural areas, and recreational lands between Darlington Park to the east, and the border with Whitby to the west, are owned by the City. However, none of this has come without a price, including the \$4 million invested into the new Ed Broadbent Park, which covers over decades-old industrial contamination.

In late 2022, the City and the Port Authority agreed on a land exchange as part of a \$30 million expansion plan at the harbour. Physical enhancements are now visible to anyone travelling along Simcoe Street, and to users of the trail system that links Lakeview Park to the Second Marsh.

Meanwhile, Doug Sanders stands in readiness for council to take him up on his challenge at finding a way forward to ultimately establish a boat launch. I reminded him that it was 1984 when city hall first looked at building just such an access point, and ever since then, progress has been anything but smooth sailing. For what seems like decades, ongoing disputes between city hall and the federally-run Harbour Commission kept a boat launch out of the harbour. The process will be no less daunting now.

There is no doubt angling and boating add a great deal to Ontario's economy, and Sanders says Oshawa will miss out if it doesn't somehow establish a proper facility. Time will tell.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE OSHAWA HARBOUR & WATERFRONT

1992... The federal government gave full control of the Second Marsh to the City as volunteers busied themselves trying to rehabilitate the property. The 214 acre marsh, nestled between Oshawa harbour and the GM headquarters property is the largest remaining Lake Ontario wetland in the Toronto area.

1994... This was a busy year for politicians and others trying to bring forward competing visions for the future of Oshawa's waterfront. Councillor Brian Nicholson featured prominently in newspaper reports at the time, suggesting the Harbour Commission (established in 1960) was attempting to lure cement companies to the port in an effort to scuttle the City's vision of a "clean and green waterfront". He and his colleague Nester Pidwerbecki would put forward a motion at council, requesting that the federal government transfer all harbour lands to the City. It was a battle that would continue for years to come.

2012... Jim Flaherty, Minister of Finance, and Oshawa MP Dr. Colin Carrie, announced the creation of a Canada Port Authority (CPA) to operate the Port of Oshawa.

2019... The Oshawa Port Authority became amalgamated with Hamilton, and is known today as the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority. Tonnages reached a high of 672,000 metric tons in 2020.

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Lisa Robinson

PICKERING CITY COUNCILLOR

An Opportunity for Pickering: Eight Key Motions to Foster Community Inclusion, Transparency, and Civic Engagement

By Lisa Robinson

As a City Councillor, it is both my privilege and responsibility to address the concerns and priorities that the residents of Pickering bring forward. Over the past few months, I have listened carefully to feedback from our community and am now introducing eight motions to our council for debate, all of which aim to foster inclusion, transparency, and better governance in Pickering.

Thus far, the only response I've received has been from the Mayor, who declined to second any of these motions. Interestingly, he's not allowed to second motions without abdicating his chair, so it's not typical for the Mayor to do so. However, he went further, suggesting that I'm in contravention of the code of conduct. I find it puzzling how advocating for residents' concerns would violate the code. Every other level of government is allowed to discuss these topics, so why is it that Pickering council keeps sanctioning me over and over again for bringing forward the concerns of the people of Pickering?

It is becoming increasingly clear that this has little to do with upholding the code of conduct and more to do with silencing the voices of those who disagree with the direction Pickering is heading in. Neutrality in our government should be something everyone supports, as it ensures all are treated equally. If we remain neutral and represent all people fairly, there should be no violation of any code. In fact, this approach would reflect the true spirit of public service—representing all people equally.

With a hopeful eye on the November council meeting, I look forward to discussing these motions openly, so that we can enter the new year with fresh perspectives and stronger policies that truly serve our diverse community.

1. Playing the National Anthem Before All Council Meetings

This motion seeks to remind us of the unity we share as Canadians. By beginning each council meeting with the National Anthem, we reinforce the idea that our work in these chambers is for the collective good of all, not just a select few.

2. Lowering the Age of a Senior from 65 to 55

Many residents aged 55-64 have expressed a desire to participate in senior-specific programs at our recreation centers. By lowering the age threshold, we will be fostering inclusivity, ensuring that more of our community members have access to these important services and programs that promote health and well-being. The health and well-being of our residents should not be tied to income. Everyone in Pickering deserves equal access to services, regardless of their financial situation. It's concerning that the city is considering otherwise, and we need to ensure that well-being remains a priority for all, not just for those who can afford it. In the future, I will again be bringing forward the snow removing motion to include all residents and not just seniors with disabilities restricted by their income.

3. Prohibition on Accepting Gifts, Benefits, or Perks from Lobbyists and Special Interest Groups

To maintain trust and integrity within our city's operations, I am proposing a strict policy prohibiting council members and city staff from accepting any gifts or benefits from lobbyists or special interest groups. This will safeguard public trust and ensure that decisions are made based on merit alone, not outside influence.

4. Changing the Executive Meeting Schedule to Promote Public Engagement

Currently, our Executive meetings occur during the workday, which limits the participation of residents who cannot attend. By moving these meetings to the evening, we can better accommodate families, small business owners, and working residents, ensuring that public input is more inclusive and robust.

5. Cash Acceptance at Recreation Centers

Reintroducing cash payment options at our recreation centers is a matter of fairness. Not everyone has access to debit or credit cards, and we need to ensure that all members of our community, regardless of their financial situation, can access our city's recreational services. During COVID, cash payments were temporarily removed. Over the past year, I've requested that cash be reinstated. Staff agreed to accept cash for transactions up to \$50, and I further asked that cash be accepted for any amount for programs and memberships. However, just a couple of weeks ago, a resident informed me that staff were unsure whether they could take cash. I believe this was an error, and this motion clarifies that cash is accepted for any amount to prevent future confusion.

6. Non-Government Flag Raising

Public spaces should remain neutral, and as such, this motion calls for limiting flag raisings to only federal, provincial, and municipal flags, with exceptions made for veterans' flags. This policy will ensure that no one belief or group is elevated above others in our city's public spaces, promoting true equality and neutrality.

7. Drag Shows and Pride Events

While our city values diversity and inclusion, it is important that all events sponsored or hosted by the city are appropriate for all age groups. This motion calls for guidelines to ensure that certain events, such as Drag Queen Storytime, The Christmas Day parade etc. maintain a standard of appropriateness, particularly for minors under 16.

8. Universal Change Rooms

The concept of universal change rooms is a growing trend in public spaces, offering inclusivity to all members of the community. However, it's vital that any change room policies implemented by the city respect both the privacy and safety of all users, especially vulnerable groups like children.

I welcome further discussions and suggestions for these motions, with the goal of ensuring that they represent the needs of all of Pickering's residents. These motions are an important step forward for our community, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to have them debated and hopefully passed by the end of this year, setting us up for a brighter, more inclusive 2025.