

*Addition to Agenda
Mar 5/2020*

Denise Holmes

From: James Webster
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 7:27 PM
To: Denise Holmes; Darren White; David Besley; David Thwaites; Margaret Mercer; Wayne Hannon
Cc: Debbie Fawcett; Sarah Harrison; Lynn Hodgson; Jennifer Weaver; Jim Hill; Jocelyn Burke
Subject: Horning's Mills Community Hall

In the spirit of positive collaboration, I'd like to submit this letter to be added to discussions for the upcoming public meeting and closed session regarding the Hall, at Council on March 5, 2020.

The Hall Board members appreciated Council's time and consideration in discussing ongoing challenges at the COW meeting on November 21, 2019. The Hall Board members left the meeting feeling that our conversations with Council were constructive, and left us optimistic working together moving forward. We were satisfied that in the end Mayor White affirmed the Township of Melancthon accepted ownership of the Horning Mills Community Hall.

At the meeting, Council requested a proposal for 2020 outlining how the Board sees the Hall best functioning, Council's potential role, and an operating budget with a projection of future investments needed. This proposal was submitted January 10, 2020. It is our hope that the requested proposal was a step forward and that Council would share their ideas and provide feedback. To date we have not received a response.

The minutes from the meeting on February 6, 2020 state that Council discussed our proposal, and that "the Township doesn't own the Hall." This is confusing as it contradicts our discussions at the COW Meeting we attended, and the Township Solicitor's legal opinion dated June 12, 2019 that states "My first question is whether or not the intent is to continue to use the Hall for community / public purposes. If it is, then **these clauses do not impact the Township's continued use and ownership of the lands in question.** If the Township intends on ceasing such use of the lands, I see **no reason why the transferor cannot require that title be reconveyed back to the owner (subject to the Institute being active)"**

As we've expressed both in writing and in person, the Board has found Council not accepting ownership of the Hall to be a fundamental problem that can taint communications and operating / investment requests. Council's disownment of the Hall disenfranchises dedicated volunteers who work very hard and take pride in the building and the phenomenal benefits that it serves for the social and financial vitality of our communities. Council's reluctance to operate or support the Hall goes against the spirit of the Women's Institute agreement and transfer of deed that states the Hall was gifted to Melancthon Township under the condition it be used to serve the community "for the public purposes".

In the past few years the Hall has hosted rentals that are a part of all facets of a thriving Community: baby showers, birthdays, wedding showers, weddings, funerals, staff parties, local club dinners, Halloween, Easter, local a popular community dinner series, accessible yoga and fitness classes, a place of refuge during a neighbour's house fire, business / corporate meetings / public presentations, elections, company parties, neighbour meetups, etc etc etc. We all share a common unity in this Township, and the Hall is its heart.

In 2019, the Township of Melancthon spent \$118, 803 on the Shelburne, North Dufferin, and Dundalk arenas, all of which the Township does not hold ownership. Not giving the Hall a mere \$5,000 annually to cover the base operating costs of such a fundamental center of community for the people of Melancthon is hard to understand. Covering operating costs lifts morale of all volunteers to know that their fundraising efforts, time and skills, are going toward enriching the Community with social events, making improvements to the building, and having a modest safety net for future upgrades of a historic building- and not for basic operating costs of heat / hydro / snow clearing etc. As shown in

the Board's previous letter and affirmed by Council at the COW meeting, the Board has worked very well in the past number of years, and numerous major upgrades have been carried out with a limited budget.

As I have stated over the years and recently with my resignation as Manager, performing many duties at the Hall had become too much for me as a busy business owner and new father, to continue in multiple roles of both Manager and Chair of the Board.

I'm sensitive to the fact that rewriting the Hall bylaw and determining any changes may take some time, so may I suggest that instead of resigning my duties as Manager, I continue in this capacity to look after rentals / cleaning / garbage / etc and sit on the board as a general member- stepping down as chair- reverting the position to current Vice Chair and Woman's Institute rep Debbie Fawcett. I feel this is a better solution in order to alleviate the strain on my time while ensuring that the Hall can still be used for the benefit of the community during this interim period. The Hall Board could call a meeting for March 10, 2020 and pass this via motion.

I hope you will consider this letter in good faith and receive it in the spirit it is intended. I look forward to Council's thoughts.

Sincerely

James C Webster