PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING COMMENTS

17. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING - Property located at 723 Lorne Ave. (Lorne Avenue Public School) - Demolition Request

- Jen Pastorius, 837 Elias Street – expressing appreciation to the planning staff for all of their work on this project and especially with this report to Mr. K. Gonyou, Heritage Planner, for his thoughtful collaboration and collection of information about the site; realizing that there is not a lot of happiness around the word “demolition” to be completely honest; however, the heritage aspects that have been retained and the work moving forward on the site, it will be really exciting to see what we can do moving forward; looking forward to the further planning processes with those in mind but at this particular time she wanted to give her thanks to the planning staff for their efforts.
- Frank Filice, Resident, Old East Village – echoing the thanks to the City of London staff for the work that they have done on the Lorne Avenue file; advising that right from the start, when they were facing the possibility of the school being closed, they had a lot of support from the City of London, which was appreciated; thinking that, at this point in time, the demolition of the school is the best option, the City, by doing what you have done, have acknowledged how important this particular site is to the Old East Village, almost in the middle of the village; having a park there that will allow them to do some of the things that the school allowed them to do in terms of social interaction and those kinds of things is a good option with the additional possibility for infill residential that could adhere to the Heritage Conservation District guidelines; will give them a site in the center of this community that they can all be really proud of and that will enhance the community; pointing out that an empty building that could go on to be derelict for years to come with an uncertain future for this site is something that they were dreading; expressing appreciation to the City of London for bringing us to this point and they look forward to working with the Council and coming up with a fabulous solution for the Lorne Avenue site.
- Sarah Merritt, 831 Elias Street – indicating that her involvement with the Lorne Avenue Public School goes back to 1993 as a community worker with London Inter-Community Health Centre, as a member of the Save Lorne Avenue school, a committee when she was the Manager of the Old East Village Business Improvement Area; reviewing the reports and the heritage report was really fascinating reading; talking about a building, but there is a whole history, an oral history of who has been in that building and what that school did; pointing out that the report started in 2011 but their engagement with respect to trying to retain that school actually started in 2005; giving the Planning and Environment Committee this history because she is going to speak in support of demolition because her history of involvement with the City of London and area residents has led her to believe that the City, the Planning department, Realty Services, have done everything that was humanly possible to try to find alternative uses for that school; advising that, in 2005, the Thames Valley District School Board had hired the Watson Group to look at schools that should be closed in the area and the same time as Watson did that, they were also hired to do a report looking at the kind of uses that could go into the McCormick site; noting that, at the time that they were recommending the closure of Lorne Avenue Public School, they were also recommending housing intensification in the McCormick site; advising that those of us that worked in that area always saw a bit of a contradiction there; indicating that between 2007 and 2009, a group of them were involved in a whole series of community engagement discussions around possible repurposing of the school or shared use of the school; noting that those discussions occurred before they actually being assigned an arc; indicating that there was a previous successful attempt at having the school removed from an arc process before they were finally assigned to an arc; stating that the Accommodation Review Committee did incredible work; noting that Frank Felice was actually the representative from Lorne Avenue Public School and, as is noted in some of the earlier reports, the Accommodation Review Committees final report actually recommended that none of the schools should be closed and that the Thames Valley District School Board should actually pursue partnerships with the City and other groups for shared use of the

school; giving the Planning and Environment Committee this history because she wants the Committee to know how much work was done to try to find other uses for that school; advising that, as a community, there were over eighty presentations that occurred from groups from beyond the City of London including Mr. J.M. Fleming, Managing Director, Planning and City Planner as well as the then Mayor to speak to keeping that school open; thinking it was a fight that they went into knowing they were not going to win; commenting that there is more than one thing in London that can stink at times but they have moved on; indicating that she, personally, as a Business Improvement Area Manager was involved in helping people to put together proposals for the possible shared use of the school with the Community Association; noting that when the EUI was circulated, nothing came forward that could support the use of the school; as anyone who came forward could not afford money, there was no money available to really keep the school open; *(Councillor Turner advises Ms. Merritt that the scope of this discussion is really on the heritage aspect.)*; Ms. Merritt responding that she understands that but she is giving the Committee that history because what she is going to be saying is that all of this is leading her to supporting the heritage but she really thinks that history is important when it comes to demolishing a heritage building and she is trying to demonstrate that this municipality, with the Planning department and the community did everything that was humanly possible to keep that building, that heritage building, up; apologizing if she did not make that clear but that is why she is giving the Committee the information she is giving them; stating that it is one thing to stand up and say take it down, but for somebody like her who has been involved in that school from 1993, this is not an easy thing to stand up and say but she is giving everyone that history of their engagement to say that she can speak with certainty that she thinks that this is the best solution to the issue; indicating that from 2013 onwards, they participated in trying to source partners to keep the school open, they have worked with the City of London when they were looking at shared use of that school and park design; noting that that did not work either; advising that they are still working on park design with the City and want to continue with that; expressing support for the staff recommendation for demolition but what she particularly wants to stress is the staff recommendation for future uses of the school, specifically Section 6.1 of the Old East Heritage Conservation District Plan; advising that she is supporting the demolition as long as Section 6.1 goes through as they really need whatever goes in there, if they are going to lose a heritage building, whatever goes in there as an alternative use on that site needs to support the Heritage Conservation District; pointing out that the experience that they have had working with City staff and Council has been the best and most positive experience that any community that has battled to keep their school open could ever hope for; believing that if the staff are coming forward now with a recommendation to demolish that heritage building, she can say to the Committee from all of the work that they have been involved in, that they can support that because they know that this municipality did everything that they could to retain that building.