

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING COMMENTS

3.6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING – Demolition Request for Heritage Designated Property – 123 Queens Avenue

- *(Councillor P. Squire wondering what the Heritage Impact Assessment document is.);* Ms. K. Gowan, Heritage Planner, indicating that a Heritage Impact Assessment was submitted by the applicant and they are usually submitted by applicants; it is a study to determine impacts of a proposed development and it can make recommendations to mitigate impacts that result of the proposed development.
- Rick Stranges, Principle, VanBoxmeer & Stranges Structural Engineers, on behalf of the applicant – advising that last week they were asked to do a quick assessment of the structure and provide comments on the condition of the building; due to the timeline they only completed a visual assessment, they did not complete any destructive testing of the concrete or the steel reinforcing; outlining that the initial investigation started with the review of the outside of the structure; noting that their first thoughts were that there is quite a bit of extensive deterioration, delamination of the beams/slabs, there was exposed and corroding rebars and beams that you can see in the centre photo on the left hand side; advising that there were no signs of stirrups that would be required in today's construction of that type of structure; thinking that is shown on photo number four of their report; indicating that once they completed the outside review, they moved toward the inside and they met a representative of Stantec who provided access to the building; pointing out that he was asked if they would mind securing the building and locking it once they completed it and the representative was going to go on their way but when he stood inside the building he saw the condition of the structure and he asked that they remain there with him; advising that the concern was not that he was going to fall over an unbarricaded opening, the concern was literally that if he had fallen through a floor, a concrete floor, that there would be nobody there to help him; pointing out that as they were doing their review they noted that there was quite a bit of deterioration of the slabs and beams on the interior as well, similar to spalling concrete, delamination, concrete that had fall on the slab below and was pilling up and there was an area in the building where he asked the representative from Stantec not to step on that portion of the floor for concern that he could fall through that as well; advising that they found that the areas that were most severely deteriorated were the slabs and beams located in the suspended slab above the basement areas; advising that if you look at photo nine of their report you can see some of the delamination; advising that the floor on the south half of the building was a big concern for them; indicating that there was also an area on the west part of the laneway that literally is a suspended slab supporting that laneway and from underneath you could see some of the photos shown on the screen where they are being shored to prevent collapse of the laneway; knowing that the building has been abandoned since approximately 1995 and in almost twenty-five years the interior of the building has been exposed to water and freeze/thaw cycles, almost without exception interior buildings that are constructed today do not have air entrainment in the concrete; noting that he will not bore you with air-entrainment unless the Committee really wants to know but suffice it to say that there have been no provisions for that; what air-entrainment does, in a nutshell, is it prevents when water freezes in concrete, it allows the freezing concrete that expands to enter a void and reduce the stresses on the concrete; this building has not been designed for that; both the lack of air-entrainment and years of freeze-thaw cycles have been working at deteriorating the concrete and the reinforcing of this building; understanding that the Heritage Conservation District plan report discusses the severe structural instability and although they cannot comment on that right now as they would have to do a complete analysis on the structure, they can state that a majority of the individual structural elements of

this building are severely compromised with respect to structural integrity; advising that this, to him, is more of a concern than the structural stability at this point should someone enter the building. (See attached presentation.)

- Meaghan Rivard, Stantec - (See attached presentation.)
- Adam Jean, Chief Operating Officer, Harrison Pensa – indicating that they employ approximately sixty lawyers and one hundred staff and they are tenants of 450 Talbot Street, which is adjacent to 123 Queens Avenue; expressing their strong support for the safe and careful removal of the remaining building structure located at 123 Queens Avenue; pointing out that while the location does have historical significance, in its current state it is not representative of our city, past or present and the revitalization of the Downtown core; advising that the building has been uninhabited as mentioned for decades, what remains is a shell with boarded up windows and doors and a decaying concrete exterior and roof; it continues to deteriorate and it is putting it politely to say that it is an eyesore in an area of Downtown that is otherwise being revitalized; the issue is amplified with being in a high traffic area with the Downtown Fanshawe College campus, the parking lot adjacent to that, the heavy traffic that drives along Queens Avenue and pedestrians including those who attend the many events at Budweiser Gardens and the new Dundas Place; believing it should be a safety concern from the City from both a personal property perspective and individual safety perspective; reiterating that the building continues to deteriorate, they have had instances where pieces have fallen off on to the cars in the parking lot in the alley below; from a safety perspective, there is a lot of unlawful activity that happens in the past, inside the building as well as the alley way between 450 Talbot Street and 123 Queens Avenue and that is not just to the public but that is to many trespassers that do arrive on the property and, as was mentioned, once inside anything can happen; indicating that despite the efforts of the previous and current owners to keep people out the barriers blocking entrances to the building are frequently broken into and become a magnet for unlawful behaviour and activity including significant drug and alcohol use; advising that the issues do extend to the alleyway between 123 Queens Avenue and 450 Talbot Street because of the physical barrier that the remaining structure does create, it is common to find used needles and other unsanitary items and significant refuse discarded in and around the building; stating that it is becoming more common to see drug use during regular business hours and their staff and professionals see that out their windows when they look towards 123 Queens Avenue; if there was a willingness to preserve the historical features of this building they believe it should have been done decades ago, the reality is that they believe that the public and the City Councillors have a problem on our hands with this building and in their view, unfortunately, the only practical solution at this time is to remove it safely; believing it is fine and well to say that the building should be restored and preserved but to date no group has come forward willing to make that investment and during that time the building continues to decay while trespassers continue to use it as a safe haven from unlawful activity; advising that in its current state it provides no historical, cultural or economic value and they now have a new owner willing to do something to change the course; believing we should seize this opportunity to remove the building structure safely in favour of a solution that allows some historical preservation at another location and education on the site; advising that it is their view that it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously harmed on this property; indicating that they fully support and commend the efforts of the new owners of 123 Queens Avenue to remove the building so the property can better reflect the Downtown core, remove the safety hazards that exist and be put to a productive use; strongly encouraging those that oversee the process on behalf of the City to do the same.
- Janet Hunten, 253 Huron Street – advising that the building proudly proclaims its construction in the posts and beams, this was once common in Downtown London but as far as she knows this is the last example we have; pointing out that the evidence of neglect is presumably due to neglect of the roof, the roof

leaks, those leaks cause deterioration of the interior; believing it could be rehabilitated as so many others of their older buildings have been in recent years.

- Martha Leach, 1012 Wellington Street – indicating that she is part of the ownership group of this property; reiterating that the ongoing concern daily for people's safety here; advising that she absolutely loves old buildings, she finds them absolutely the most interesting but in this situation, she did not know at all what they were signing up for and it is absolutely their intention to rebuild something amazing and awesome on this site; believing it is not their highest and best use to have it as a parking lot but they do not have a site plan for that as yet; reiterating that it is their intention to redevelop but they do not have actual drawings.