Presentation to City Council Weds.Oct.12th 2005 Re Rezoning of Canoe Club Property

My name is Mo Tipples and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to make comments on this particular subject. I was employed for 18 years as an Executive Administrator in the Manitoba Sport Federation system and over that period of time was involved with the planning, programming, financial accounting and grant applications for at least 12 sport governing bodies. I was also an elected member of the Sport Manitoba Board of Directors for a period of 6 years, serving on a number of their Committees. In these roles I was totally aware of the multitude of health benefits, physical and mental, of sporting activities for all ages, whether practiced at the elite or recreational level.

Which brings me to the subject on the table at this time, namely the razing of the former WCC and the rezoning of the land at 50 Dunkirk Place. I would like to emphasize to the City the inherent value of the sport facilities and associated health benefits that are soon to disappear forever with the razing and rezoning of this facility – a facility which fell into the hands of the City in default of taxes by a not-for-profit group and because of non-interest by two mortgage holders. That was a total 'Windfall' for the City.

When the German group leased the facility over four years ago, they had managed to obtain over **$2.3m** of grant funding from various levels of government. Hence the building about to be razed contains many infrastructure improvements achieved **with taxpayers' money**. As for the standard of these sport facilities: the Badminton courts are the best in the Province; as well, indoors are 4 squash courts and 2 racquetball courts. The 10 Hartru tennis courts are the only ones of this type available to the public in the city. This particular surface is much easier on the body than all the City's hard courts!

Since the clubhouse was closed 4 years ago, the City has been slow in the extreme to do anything about the building, which has consequently attracted local youth who gather to conduct dubious activities. An RFP (Request for Proposal) was finally placed a couple of years ago and according to rumor, nothing attractive (financially we ask?) to the city, was received, although all of the sports involved in the facility wanted it to remain open. The huge delay in putting out this RFP could have been largely responsible for the loss of interest by any groups who may have been interested. In the meantime the long awaited Recreational Facility report for the City was released and several articles nationally have indicated how a fairly large percentage of our population is unfit, obese and diabetes-ridden. That is, in bad health and in need of exercise!

Where was, or is, the proactive and creative thinking in our City? Here has been a large facility long waiting for revitalization, which could have been used in many innovative ways to service a greater need for the well being and preventative healthcare of many citizens of all ages. Indeed, one group was interested in adapting it for a Wellness center containing a number of Health and Fitness activities. Their interest was lost for lack of the expedient release of the RFP. Was this a calculated plan on your part?

I would draw your attention to Plan Winnipeg 2020 vision, Chapters 4and 5, which indicate that "the City intends to offer support for public health and… the promotion of active living". When and where do you intend to follow this idea through, if you are busy destroying facilities, which can support these tenets?

I was part of a group of sport enthusiasts who made a presentation about the WCC to all but one of the City Community Committees over a period of 6 months in the early 2000s. In spite of receiving advance packages of information on the potential of the facility, the council members were completely disinterested and in most cases extremely rude. I remember that only two persons seemed to have actually read the material and were interested or able to ask any questions. Minds had been completely made up in advance. Is this to be the same reception that presenters will receive today at this "public hearing" here at City Hall?

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J Park
CLERK

A number of additional questions spring to mind that I would like to see addressed at this meeting today.

- I attended the meeting that the Caleb Developer group hosted in the spring. On the question of them not being the future owner of the actual riverbank property on which the clubhouse sits, but rather returning these grounds to the city for green space, it was openly said that the City does **not** have the money or the plans to develop that area! What will happen then to this prime open space? Will the City be considering using the space in the future for recreational sport purposes in 'the pursuit of active living and to the benefit of citizens health'? If so, why tear it down in the first place?

- On the question of how much the developers had to pay for the property, which is up for rezoning, I have been told on good authority that it is less than $1m! If this is true, it is daylight robbery of **OUR** prime riverfront land. And, what is more, if the planned 55 plus apartment complex is to be built on the existing parking lot and tennis courts, will the City be receiving prime tax returns on the sale of this land? Do we really need another multi dwelling building on this green space anyway? When my sister visited from the UK several years ago, she commented on how green and treed the City looked. Should we not be trying to preserve this sort of image and let city folk have places where they can stay in touch with natural surroundings? (See Plan Winnipeg Ch. 5 "the creation of a beautiful city").

- Over the last few years I have become totally disillusioned by our City Council and Planners. Recreational facilities do not appear to be important and it is left to the community clubs or to private commercial operations to fulfill the need. Yet we hear of possible condos being built in Assiniboine Park and at the edge of Assiniboine Forest, huge mega suburbs being built where there is already too much traffic and congestion, no definitive thinking being given to the need for a rapid transit system! Where is the co-ordination and cohesion for these bright ideas? I have discovered the existence of the 2020 long -range plan only very recently and I wonder where these ideas and the rezoning matter today fit into the overall Plan? Are all of your decisions based on this plan or do the tenets incorporated in the plan get forgotten when the chance of additional tax dollars rears its head? Is the raising of money the only reason for Council to exist? Does Council ever think about what legacies and infrastructure we are leaving for the next generation? Why is it that in contrast to Winnipeg, other cities seem to acquire some remarkable facilities for recreational sport use?

Perhaps the Public Hearing today can enlighten us on these questions? Or are your minds already made up in advance of our input and are you merely paying lip service to a regulatory requirement by asking our opinions now?

I remain a totally frustrated citizen,

Mo Tipples.