PRESENTATION TO EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

November 8, 2017

Agenda Item #5 – Wilkes Alignment to William R. Clement Parkway Extension

Lori Dobbie

I am a resident of Loudoun Road in the South Wilkes area, and Vice-President of the South Wilkes Community Association. I am speaking in support of the motion to pursue the widening of Wilkes Avenue.

As you have heard from other speakers, the Option #4 route was never presented to the public until September of this year, although previous councilor Paula Havixbeck tells us it was first introduced as a possibility in 2012 or even earlier. The route has been actively pursued by the Public Works Department and its consultants at WSP (formerly MMM) since December of 2014. However, this route was never mentioned during the public consultations held after that date on January 19, 2016. Many residents of the Wilkes South area have applied for and received a variety of permits for renovations and new construction since 2014. No mention of the potential development of the Option #4 road was made to these people by the City's staff when the permits were issued. The issuance of building permits for new homes and renovations to homes on these large lots in the area indicates that the City has been *supportive* of this kind of residential development in the area.

The residents of this community have chosen to live here because of the unique character of this neighbourhood. It is one of the only communities within the city limits which is in a rural, partially agricultural, large lot setting. People in this area are willing to put up with the high cost of having our water delivered and our waste pumped out (because we are not connected to these city services) and the high taxes, as a trade-off for living in such a unique community. A four-lane highway right through the middle of the neighbourhood would completely change the character of the area and significantly reduce the value of our properties, resulting in huge claims for compensation, as you have heard earlier today.

Although the members of our community association are strongly opposed to a route through this unique neighbourhood, we recognize that an east/west connection of Sterling Lyon Parkway to the proposed extension of the William R. Clement Parkway will be necessary at some point in the future. But the route that makes the most sense is clearly a route that makes use of the east/west road which already exists, being Wilkes Avenue.

Property owners along Wilkes have known for decades that an expansion of that road was likely to occur in the future, and there are a few who are even looking forward to receiving compensation for partial expropriations down the road. The same is NOT true of the residents of the community south of Wilkes.

The compensation afforded to property owners who are expropriated is intended, as far as possible, to "make whole" those owners. However, it would be impossible to "make whole" residents of this community, as there is NO other community they can move to within the city limits, at least not in the south west part of the city, which can offer a similar large lot, rural residential / agricultural community. On the other hand, at least the 6 owners of commercial property along Wilkes who would be fully expropriated by an expansion of Wilkes have many options for comparable property available to them.

I would also like to point out that there is one mysterious property owner who would stand a lot to gain from the road proposed by WSP. The registered owner of *these* lands (*show on map*) is Akro Enterprises Ltd. This is a huge parcel of undeveloped land. We understand it consists of approximately 1550 acres. The only information on the ownership of this company which can be found on a public search is that it is owned by Cy Fien, a Winnipeg tax lawyer. The land was acquired from Qualico in 2007. Clearly, a tax lawyer would have no use for such a huge parcel of undeveloped land. It is highly likely that this is owned by the lawyer in trust, likely for a developer, so that the developer's name will not be discernable through public searches. This is a tactic that is often used by developers who want to keep their names off the public record prior to development.

It is not surprising that a prominent developer has been in the news recently speaking in support of the road through our neighbourhood. The creation of that road would render *this* parcel (*show on the map*) unusable for residential development purposes, which would result in a very expensive expropriation claim by that owner. The amount that would be payable to that land owner would be based on the highest and best use, which would be a pretty large sum if it was earmarked for development.

In addition, the road would create access for potential development of *this* parcel (*show on map*), which would otherwise have to be paid for at least in part by the developer. The Option #4 road would also provide hydro and other infrastructure access to the developer at the City's cost.

Simply by having the road put in now, before any development is officially being proposed, not only would the developer have infrastructure and an important access route paid for by the City, but it would also have a large chunk of money in its pockets from the expropriation claim prior to commencing development. While we do not oppose development of the lands, this should not be done at the taxpayers' expense.

It has also been said by a certain developer, in the media, that the City should never have permitted large lot residential development in the South Wilkes area. Well, that development HAS been LEGALLY permitted to proceed for quite some time. Great cities recognize that large lot rural-like residential neighbourhoods are part of a diverse city, despite what might be in the interests of large developers.

We are putting our trust in you to support this motion and help us to preserve our unique neighbourhood.

Thank you.