Council Direction:

At its meeting of April 14, 2010, Council was in receipt of correspondence from Mr. M. Jelly, requesting immediate action on the former Royal Connaught Hotel (82-112 King Street East, Hamilton). Following the initiation of a “By-law Crawl” event, and a review of the state of the subject property, Mr. Jelly advised that he wished “to urge Council to fast-track the heritage designation currently being considered by staff” in order to advise the property owners that it “be made clear that their eventual plans for the property must include a restoration of the building” (see attached Appendix “A” to Report PED10178).

Information:

In October, 2008, Council approved a new designation process under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act (PED08211). As part of the new process, requests for designation were assigned to staff’s work program with a Council assigned priority for the coming year(s). In 2008, the potential designation of the former Royal Connaught Hotel was assigned to the year 2009 as a high priority. Since that time, with additional requests for designation and amended and higher priorities, the potential designation of the subject property has been assigned to 2011 (PED10006).
In 2008, Council also assigned the subject property to the City's Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest, established under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. This allows temporary protection against demolition for up to 60-days.

Staff has reviewed the current work load, and is of the opinion that there is insufficient flexibility to meaningfully advance the potential designation of the subject property over others at this time from 2011 to the current year 2010.

Designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act does not guarantee “restoration”, as sought by Mr. Jelly, but simply puts in place a system for the management of any alterations to, or the demolition of, designated heritage structures, building fabric, or other heritage attributes identified in the designating By-law.

Staff is of the opinion that no further Council direction to staff is required at this time, but staff will continue to recognize this as a priority.

Appendices:

- Appendix “A”: Correspondence from Mr. M. Jelly
Carson, Katie

From: Eisenberger, Fred
Sent: Friday, March 26, 2010 1:12 PM
To: Matt Jelly
Cc: Carson, Katie
Subject: RE: The Royal Connaught

Good afternoon Matt,

I am appreciative of the work being conducted by Glyn Wide and the by-law team. As a courtesy, I will forward this to city clerks to be submitted as Council correspondence.

Regards,
Mayor Fred

Original Message

From: Matt Jelly [mailto:mattjelly@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 22, 2010 5:21 PM
To: Eisenberger, Fred; McIntire, Brian; Breitme, Bob; Merulla, Sam; Collings, Chad; Jackson, Tom; Duvall, Scott; Whitehead, Terry; Clark, Brad; Pearson, Marla; Mitchell, Dave; Ferguson, Lloyd; Powers, Russ; Pasuta, Robert; McCarthy, Margaret
Subject: The Royal Connaught

ATTN: Mayor Eisenburger and Hamilton City Council

Good afternoon,

I'm writing today to urge your immediate action on downtown Hamilton's historic Royal Connaught Hotel.

As some of you know, I've recently started a citizens group called By-Law Crawl. We focus on vacant and derelict properties, primarily in the downtown core, documenting serious infractions on these properties and forwarding those infractions to appropriate By-Law Enforcement. We meet on the first Saturday of every month, and our third By-Law Crawl event takes place on April 3rd, and I'll be forwarding more specific information on this event to all members of council later this week.

We have already forwarded a number of infractions we've found at the Royal Connaught- on the first Crawl event, we found a ground-floor entrance open to trespass, as well as a number of broken windows, and the rather large pile of debris in the back lot. Since then, we've continued to monitor the condition of the property, and forwarded subsequent complaints to staff. I'm glad to say By-Law staff (particularly Glyn Wide) has been responsive to our concerns, and are following up these complaints, working with the owners to mitigate some of the problems we've identified. But this is a long-term problem that needs a long-term solution. The damage continues daily- and our group only reports what we see from the outside. To me, it indicates that there are also serious problems inside the building. The public needs some assurance that the City is doing everything in its power to prevent any further damage from occurring.

The Royal Connaught is currently not designated as a heritage building. I want to urge council to fast-track the heritage designation currently being considered by staff. This building is a crucial part of our community, and the owners need to understand their responsibilities. It needs to be made clear that their eventual plans for the property must include a restoration of the building.

If this dereliction continues unabated, I believe council should consider expropriation and resale to a developer who fully appreciates the building and has the wherewithal to redevelop. I know this approach can't be taken with every building- but in this case, if the owners continue to ignore their responsibilities,
it's the only option we have left. We can't allow these owners to make their private holding a public problem- we shouldn't have to intervene the same way we did with the Lister; too late. We should be clear with the owners that they can't let the Connaught decay to the point that only public funds can save it.

I urge you to do the right thing- the citizens of Hamilton are not prepared to sit and watch as another amazing heritage building sits degraded by a group of speculators who don't have any interest in redevelopment unless it includes public funds. Council has a responsibility to act now before it's too late.

Thanks for your time,

Matt Jolly
www.bylawcrawle.ca