2013 BUDGET
February 21, 2013

Mr. Mayor, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for these few minutes for my presentation.

A review of the draft Operating Budget indicates an effort has been made to achieve Base Budget savings in several areas. The Police Services Board has turned back the Police budget not once but twice. The Operating Budget for H.ECF.I. now seems under a modicum of control, although a 1.2 million tax supported capital budget is proposed. However, the City continues to have a sizeable Capital Deficit, 195 million this year.

The City is getting bad publicity from a mal-functioning group of staff. To an outsider, it appears the group has taken advantage of lax management and oversight. Taxpayers expect the City Manager to take quick action and review and improve City supervision procedures.

Under the terms of the Urban Rural Area Rating Agreement, the 7 suburban Wards will pay 3.3 million more in property taxes this year for the benefit of 8 City Wards. This is the third such payment. Next year will be the final payment for a total of 13.2 million equivalent to a 2 ½ % tax increase.

A line in the Budget shows a 34.4% increased payment for corporate pensions. Is this a payment for under funded Pension Plans? What is the standing of the funding of the City’s three defined benefit plans?

I also ask the Mayor to please advise when the much delayed and much needed review of amalgamation will take place. From a business standpoint, this is long overdue and requires a budget for an independent review.

In conclusion, the Abrey Zimmerman stone house in Courtcliffe Park in Carlisle has been vacant for 14 years. It is regarded as the finest example of a residence for the period in the entire area. In 2000, I and Sylvia Wray archivist were able to have it designated as an Heritage Site. Ever since, I have been trying to have it preserved and restored.

The City Planning Department came into the picture 4 years ago when the zoning came up for revision. Shortly after, a buyer emerged who wished to restore the house but would require a severance. The Planning Department claimed this would not be possible due to the Green Belt Provincial legislation, but they would see what could be done. I subsequently checked back to Planning Department several times but always were told the Green Belt legislation stands in the way.

Recently, through a Senior Planner in the Ontario Government, I learned that no difficulty should be encountered with this legislation regarding a severance if no new building was done.
I relayed this information by phone to a Senior Planner with the City. The response was that the property was under a “process” but would not tell me what the “process” was nor how far along that process had reached. I was astonished by such secrecy.

Accordingly, I ask the City Manager why there is such secrecy on the matter and why there is such a very wide discrepancy between the City’s version of the Green Belt and the Province’s. Thirdly, what is being done to move forward the possibility of the sale and restoration of the Abrey-Zimmerman House? It would be a win – win for the Community and the City.

The City Council’s mandate expires at year end, I wish you the best of luck in your remaining months.

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