Thursday, April 20, 2006

Hamilton City Hall
71 Main Street West
Hamilton, Ontario
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City Clerk’s Office

In my past 6 years as Chairman of the Ottawa Street Business Improvement Area, I have been asked to deal with the issue of alleys on numerous occasions. As Chairman, I feel strongly that it is time we get a resolution to our problems.

In the past, City staff has been requested, to do some minor repairs to the alleyways that parallel Ottawa Street North on both the east and west sides, extending from Barton Street to Main Street. Our maintenance requests have always been small in nature but the problems are on going and are now serious enough to warrant more significant efforts.

The problems related to the alleyways include: snow plowing, potholes, graffiti, garbage, grading/flooding, dumping, lighting, aesthetics, insurance/liability, abandoned vehicles and bylaw enforcement.

On some occasions, the City has agreed to do small bits of repairs such as filling the occasional pothole and some increased lighting. However, maintaining the alleys in a haphazard way creates other issues and we now need resolution. For example, when potholes continue to be fixed without addressing the real problems, the grading has been changed over time and some business owners are now experiencing flooding from the alleys.

When dealing with City staff on this issue over the years, the explanations of assumed and unassumed alleys, the explanations of maintenance and repairs and the explanations of ownership, always vary. It is very difficult to get a definitive answer from anyone regarding any of the issues outlined above. There is a lack of communication and a lack of consistent answers.

In our recent attempt, to put this issue to rest, we have uncovered what we believe to be the core of the problem. We have come to learn that there is no current city policy covering the alleys. As a result, there is lots of confusion and misinformation over this issue and this is not acceptable.
Who owns the alleys? Who is responsible should someone be injured in the alleys? Why is their no policy/by law covering the alleys? Why are some paved and some not paved? The list of questions is innumerable.

We are asking for an agreement between the Ottawa Street BIA and the City of Hamilton for some maintenance to these alleys as well as correcting some of the grading problems resulting in current property damage. We are willing to work with City Staff in determining the specifics of the problems and potential solutions.

I eagerly await a timely response,

Respectfully,

John Bazinet
Chairman, Ottawa Street BIA Board of Directors

c.c. Alderman Morelli (Ward 3)
Alderman Merulla (Ward 4)
Alderman McHattie (HABIA)
Hazel Milsome