

Arts in Aurora? asks former councillor

To all you lovers of the arts, Aurora Council has reached a new low.

Some of you may have noticed a massive complex on Industrial Pkwy. N. It's called the Joint Operations Centre, JOC for short. It's been a bone of contention for me since it's inception when I was on Council.

You can read my letter in The Auroran from Thursday, March 6, 2014 to give you a history from the beginning.

The JOC saga continues.

What you can add to my letter of 2014 is an increase in cost of nearly \$3 million. Almost \$1 million because they forgot to add in the cost of financing the \$28 million dollar project.

They just learned that over \$100K was over spent from the budget.

I delegated to Council bringing up four observations/questions:

What happened to the Green Funding application?

Where are the minutes of the budget oversight committee (Mayor Dawe and Councillor Abel were members)

I suggested they contact a 3rd party auditor to review the entire project from start to finish (Mayor Dawe took it to be his own idea and recommended we use the Region to audit the project)

Lastly, I brought to their attention section 4.4 of the Towns Official Plan, which states that 1% of all major capital project has to go towards public art. That's roughly \$200k that they also did not budget for. It is a requirement, not an option for them to do this. If they don't, they are in conflict with the Official Plan,

I'm sure developers would have a thing or two to say about that. The Green fund application failed, there were no minutes taken of the committee that was struck to over see the budget (no wonder it went bonkers) and they moved to have the Region audit the process.

Back to the public art policy.

Councillor Humfries placed a motion before Council (drafted by the Director of Finance) to allocate the funds towards the compliance of the Official Plan and fund the public arts program.

It failed to get a second and did not move forward.

Needless to say I was extremely disappointed at the lack of foresight this council has demonstrated by that decision. Council had (and continues to have) a wonderful opportunity to implement the public art policy and build on the social capital this Town is desperately in need.

It shows a deep contrast to how Newmarket has been successful.

I don't have to go into any detail of how Newmarket has transformed its downtown/Riverwalk and most recently their ?Story Pod? was nominated by the Ontario Architects Association as a 2017 Design Excellence Finalist, yet we can't implement a required public art fund.

Give your heads a really big shake Aurora Council.

John Gallo
Aurora