

Presentation to the Mayor, Councilors and Staff

Mississippi Mills Council Chamber

August 9, 2016

Madame Chair, Your Worship, Councillors, and Members of Staff.

My name is Gerry Belisle and I am a ratepayer in Almonte Ward. My address is: 147 Sadler Drive.

Having served as a rural Municipal Councillor for 21 years in 2 separate rural municipalities, one of which is our sister municipality of West Carleton (Huntley Ward – Carp) for 13 years, I read with disbelief and indignation the written comments of your CAO, Diane Smithson; Councillor John Edwards and Mayor McLaughlin, in reply to Steve Maynard's letter to Council. I quote, "This Council proposes to move/sell the Don Maynard Park to the highest bidder".

Not only is this decision insensitive and callous, it is downright unethical, if not ignorant to dispose of a dedicated park.

On reading these and other comments, I could not help but wonder who is managing this municipality - the elected officials or the CAO?

For example, the following quotes will serve to give meaning to my observation. The Mayor sent a copy of his note to Steve Maynard which states: "I get it; but she had no problem, so ask her."

The subject parcel of land became a reality in 1984 when developer Frank Kremaric ceded 5% of the Albert Gale Subdivision to the Town of Almonte, as required by the Municipal Planning Act.

Subsequently, in 2003 the Council of the day saw fit to honour one of its outstanding citizens, Don Maynard, by formally dedicating those 5% parklands as the "Don Maynard Park" and formalized its decision in a subsequent by-law.

To now consider selling this dedicated park to the highest bidder, is the height of insult and disrespectful to the Maynard family, their descendants and the

community at large. In all my years of municipal politics, I have never heard of a municipality selling dedicated parkland.

You should know that your decision to sell this dedicated park has spawned mounting resentment within Mississippi Mills. Not only that, it has created a fertile environment to give rise to the creation of a new Advocacy Group that will speak on behalf of all taxpayers in the municipality. This movement is garnering unprecedented support in all 3 Wards. We have established an Informal Working Group for our Pakenham, Ramsay and Almonte Taxpayers' Action Committee and appointed an interim spokesperson.

Our C.A.O.'s presentation of this evening misses the fundamental point with respect to the purpose of ceded 5% park lands. Parklands are for the use and enjoyment of the residents in any given subdivision. To sell off this green space is to insult and let down the people who bought into the parkland when they purchased their homes as it was a condition of sale at that time.

If you are intent on selling parkland, you should obtain the consent of the residents in the targeted subdivision. Not only is this prudent, it renders Council's actions transparent and considerate.

On the other hand, if you are thinking of selling "dedicated parkland" **don't even think about it!** Dedicated is forever.

My advice to the CAO and members of Council is to abandon this silly proposal before it's too late.

Your \$18 million dollar approved budget is in place to secure funding for all expenditures including recreation. If that is not sufficient, I notice that you have a \$6.8 million Reserve Fund.

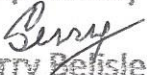
In conclusion, the sale of parkland in a subdivision should only proceed if the residents in that subdivision agree to such a disposition.

To propose to sell a dedicated park is outrageously bold and inconsiderate.

In short it is a non-starter.

Members of Council, please reset your compass, you are definitely going in the wrong direction.

Respectfully Submitted,


Gerry Belisle.

P.S. - You be the judge!

Since the municipality has issued a public statement regarding its version of the interruption that I caused when I asked a question in the first minute of my talk against Council's intention to sell the Don Maynard Park, allow me to give you the complete facts surrounding this whole issue.

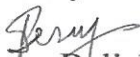
The Council decided that my question to them was "offensive and disrespectful". When the Mayor, who was sitting next to the podium where I was delivering my talk signaled to the Chair to cut my talk and microphone off (by running his hand across his throat), the hundreds of citizens gathered outside the building could no longer hear me through the speakers installed for the occasion. Acknowledging the signal from the Mayor, the Chair of the meeting interrupted my talk by calling a "recess". After 10 minutes of anger expressed by the ratepayers in the Chamber, I resumed my talk as I had access to the button to activate the inside speakers which the Mayor had hurriedly turned off.

It was the Mayor's curt reply to Steve Maynard, son of Don Maynard, stating: "I get it" (about not selling the Don Maynard Park – Block 40) "but she" (the C.A.O.) "had no problem with it" (selling this and other parklands) "so ask her" (once again, the C.A.O.) that prompted my question.

Does my question not beg to be the obvious one to be asked? Doesn't censoring my talk sound more like an overzealous rush to judgement before hearing my reasons for asking such a question?

This is the same Council that was present during a public meeting of June 28 of this year when the Mayor hurried across the floor of the Chamber and stopped within inches of a citizen's chin and waved his fist at him yelling "F—K OFF"! Council has not said anything public, or taken any action against the Mayor for his threatening, offensive and disrespectful conduct during a public meeting. It appears that the Mayor can say or do anything with impunity in the Council Chamber and the Council does not deem his conduct to be "offensive and disrespectful"!

Thank you for reading my side of the story.


Gerry Belisle