

OCTOBER 5, 2021 COUNCIL MEETING - PUBLIC HEARING

**WRITTEN SUBMISSION FOR: RECEIVED AND READ DURING THE PUBLIC
HEARING**

Pq1-2 1. Amy Vlietman

Pq2-7 2. Garth Hatch

ber 5, 2021

Town of Onoway
Mayor and Town Counsel

As a resident of Onoway my family and I fully support the proposed development of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Church members have been driving to Spruce Grove to attend Church on Sunday's, and Young Women's/Young Men's(youth group) and Church meetings several times during the week. This took a huge toll on our vehicles – the increased mileage, wear and tear as well as the cost of gas. During the winter months we were sometimes faced with treacherous road conditions which would make travel to Church very difficult. Being able to attend Church in Onoway has been a tremendous blessing to my family.

I have three children who attend the Church's youth groups. Once the Church is built in Onoway, they will be able to ride their bikes to their weekly activities.

Sometimes the youth do service work for the community. Things like raking leaves, picking up garbage and garden/yard work for the residents of the Community. These acts of service will benefit the members of our community, and, as well, it teaches the youth to give back to their community. This is just one example of the many things the youth activities might include. Youth activities may also include playing various sports and games; learning how to build things; how to repair small engines; baking and crafts; and even learning how to change a tire. Simple, yet fun and educational activities that are held in a safe and welcoming environment where everyone is loved and accepted. My children ages 14, 12 and 8 would often invite their friends to these activities, having a Church building here will make that more possible.

I feel that the youth in Onoway need more places to go and activities that will benefit them as well opportunities for them to be taught to love and help their community.

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Having the Church in Onoway will bring revenue to the businesses in Town. Members are more likely to pick up groceries, get gas or buy a pizza while in Town attending Church activities. This business was going to Spruce Groove when we attended there. I'm sure our local businesses would appreciate money being spent in our Town rather than somewhere else.

I cannot say enough great things about having the Church building in Onoway.

Having a place to attend Church and worship so close to home would be wonderful for my family and will benefit the whole community.

Thank you
Sincerely Aimee Vlietman

Thank you for the opportunity to attend here tonight and speak to the proposed development.

Thank you Madame Mayor and council for taking time and effort to hear the details of the proposal. Thank you to the citizens of Onoway and the surrounding area who have and are here to show support. Thank you to the residents of Onoway and the surrounding area who have expressed legitimate concerns that we have addressed.

Prior to any considerations here tonight, I would like to clear up some absolutely false information and a few minor misconceptions, circulated in verbal discussion, social media and a recent letter to the editor that personally, I would have been embarrassed to write.

1. To declare oneself as being not affiliated with a religious organization does not guarantee one to be unbiased, in fact, it could be taken as the opposite.
2. There are approximately 200 members of our church in the newly formed Onoway congregation. There may be more who have not registered with our church. There are approximately 150 who would be categorized as active, defined as attending church regularly.
3. There are 11 households in the town limits of Onoway, 8 additional households within 5 kilometers and 15 additional households within 10 kilometers. Approximately 5 households are outside the County of Lac Ste. Anne. For the writer of the letter to the editor in the Bulletin Dated September 27, expressing false information, I would be pleased to accompany him to each of the households in Onoway or elsewhere. I am unable to supply the names because of FOIP rules.
4. The Westporte approved but unregistered subdivision on the 8 acre parcel, involved 22 lots not 44 as noted in that letter. My math suggests that is a doubling false statement. That subdivision, being unregistered, has not, does not and will not produce empty lot tax revenue to the town.
5. The 40% or over quote related to non-profit exempt taxation, is not even in the correct ballpark.
6. In that letter there was reference to the conduct of those in public office. I would suggest that the fear mongering nature of the latter part of the letter, by the writer, a resident of Onoway, is divisive and damaging to the public perception of Onoway and area residents.

Let me address the economics of the proposal.

Presently the 8 acres sits unused and undeveloped.

Engineering estimates suggest that to service the proposed 22 lots under that approved dormant plan, the cost would be approximately \$1.2 million. Adding an artificial price tag of \$300,000 for the land, that would be \$1.5 million. That would be over \$68,000 per lot, to break even, nonprofit.

That is why it has not been developed by Westporte, that is why no other developer has interest.

Onoway simply does not have a fairy Godmother who is willing to grant \$1.5 million towards this development, when lots are projected to sell for \$40-45,000. Who in their right mind would be willing to put up that much money, and project to lose money, even if every lot were to sell.

That is why those on council and local supporters see tonight's proposal as true financial reality.

The proposal tonight includes and would proceed in the following manner.

1. Westporte would sell the property to the Church.
2. The Church simultaneously would give to the town of Onoway, the dedicated green space expected for this proposal and additional lands owed as deferred reserve from the previous residential development.
3. The Church, also simultaneously, would sell the approximate 3 acres to a Developer.

In simplicity, the Town would get its approximately 3 acres for green space and dry pond, the Developer would purchase his approximately 3 acres, and the Church would retain approximately 2 acres.

So why does this development proposal work while others don't?

Because the Church is willing to provide reserve acres to the town free of charge for its present proposed development and also fill the deferred reserve commitment from the previous residential development.

Because the church is willing to sell to the Developer the 3 acres at its per acre cost, and not make a profit.

Because the Church is willing to pay for services, water, sewer and paving at a proportionate cost above its actual usage, meaning, we will be subsidizing the residential development.

Because we were able to find a willing Developer who was willing to upfront servicing and take a chance on this community.

In the May 2021 open house, some concerns were forwarded by the Town council and the citizens. Numerous plans and drawings have been considered to address these concerns. I will note a few of them. In response to the one letter of objection that claimed this project was being rushed, I would remind them that 5 months have passed since the May open house.

1. The traffic concern was noted and addressed. There will be an access made off 47 Avenue. Church members will be asked to use this entrance and exit. The Town cannot do the same for the residents of the proposed 13 lots because they are residents and have the right to any public roadway.
2. The location of the church was changed so that the proposed residential lots were backing onto present residential lots. Some present lot owners stated they preferred to back on to houses rather than a church and a parking lot.
3. The Church lot was put as far south as possible so that present residential lots backing on the back alley had ample green space between the back alley and the church.
4. The Church lot was also put as far south as possible to lower the elevation of the already designed low elevation church building, giving better sight lines to residences.

5. The trees along 47 Avenue will be preserved as much as possible. Some present houses along 47 Avenue have chosen to remove trees for their residential development, we will make every attempt not to do that.

6. Some concerns were noted about the green space and pipeline right of way by residents who presently use it for personal reasons. There will be no development there and it will remain as is.

7. Some concerns were noted about the level of development and completion of the church. The Church builds to exceeding high architectural and engineering standards. The church lot will be fully landscaped by professionals and the parking lot will be paved. The grounds will be maintained by professional landscape professionals, contracted by the church.

8. Questions were asked about the proposed residential housing. The Developer plans on single family homes, primarily bungalow type, but will adjust plans to accommodate council and citizen preferences.

9. Drainage was discussed, and the engineers for both the town, church and developer have found solutions to the drainage issue

10. By far the largest concern, was the expectation of the council and residents that no costs for development would be borne or even advanced to be paid back by the developer or the Church. The present proposal is that the Town of Onoway will not have any financial obligations regarding the development. All costs will be borne by the Church and the Developer. In addition, the Church will submit a letter of commitment regarding their development plans and in addition will provide a sizable monetary deposit to be held by the town to guarantee their participation. The Developer will also provide a letter of commitment and the same monetary deposit.

For public record, the Church paid for the entire costs of the May open house, including the Town's engineer consultants.

As to the time line.

If tonight's proposal meets with approval soon, the legal transactions can be completed promptly. Once all legal transactions are completed, final engineering and design work on the subdivision plan will take place. Once that is finished, registration at land titles will be done. Presently there is a 2 month delay on land title registrations. We are hoping all would be complete by mid January 2022. For the Church, design, architectural and engineering of the building will then proceed. Simultaneously, the engineering, testing, design of the servicing will be occurring. That may take the larger part of the summer of 2022. The goal is that all preparation work will be done in 2022, including tendering of the project with construction to begin the spring of 2023, with an approximate 12-14 month build. Though the Church will tender the project professionally, all efforts to use local contractors, employment and supplies will be made.

Simultaneously, the Developer will begin his work, and will meet a similar time commitment.

So who are we:

We are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Globally, about 17 million members. There are more members outside North American than within. We operate with a lay clergy, ecclesiastic positions are unpaid. We have professionals and office workers who are paid.

We have chapels and temples, chapels are open to all of our members and all of the public, the temples are for our church members who wish further religious teachings.

We are well known for our missionary program. Years ago our youth missionaries often were seen going door to door. Today, not so. They contact through social media and other less direct means. Their focus has become community service, where we integrate and participate in family and community service projects. There are about 50,000 of them that serve for 1-2 years, paying their own way.

We are perhaps better known for our worldwide humanitarian involvement. We donated more than a billion dollars in 2020. We participated in over 3500 projects worldwide in 160 countries. Food and clothing aid, wheel chairs, vision care, immunizations, maternal and newborn care, clean water projects, refugee assistance, emergency response. We often partner and fund other NGO's, such as Catholic Social Services, Baptists Worldwide, The Red Cross, Salvation Army. In additions we provide up to 20,000 adults (often retired) missionaries who serve as unpaid volunteers with these and other humanitarian projects.

*churchofjesuschrist.org type in the search -- humanitarian

Back to our community.

We are willing to participate in any community project we are invited to do so. In the last 2 weeks we were part of our church's province wide food drive for our local food banks. Here in Onoway, we not only covered Onoway town proper but surrounding acreages in Lac Ste Anne. We collected for our local food bank. With thanks expressed from them, they commented that the amount collected would take care of their needs for about 6 months.

We were ready with 25 volunteer for the Harvest Festival that got cancelled. So much of this support, that previously went to Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, can now be directed to the community of Onoway.

Our lay clergy and support staff are actively involved in the community. They hold full time employment to support their families in addition to their church service. We have organizations for the children, the youth, the women and the men where everyone is invited. Each of those leaders and teachers volunteer their time to serve.

At a future date of development, and not part of this proposal, our Church will be pleased to partner with the Town of Onoway or another local non-profit group and develop some type of recreational project on some of the green space, be it a soccer field, basketball court, etc.

I was asked to identify what a church contributes to the community. I will address that now.

Our church has it own welfare system. Locally, we provide access to our Church's regional food storehouse for families to utilize in times of needs, such as loss of employment etc. These regional storehouses are supplied by church owned farms, orchards, ranches, etc. Often those employed are there to learn skills similar to how "Goodwill" operates. Other financial assistance may be given for items such as rent, utilities, etc., where circumstances require. We have professional certified psychologists that church members may access for all types of professional counselling. We have employment counselling and programs to assist our members who require or wish to upgrade their employment. We have family assistance opportunities rendered by our womens program called the

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Relief Society. We have emergency services assisting communities where needed. For instance we played a large part in the Slave Lake flood many years ago and in the recent Slave Lake and Fort McMurray fires. We have youth programs teaching everyday skills that will be useful in later employment life. We have youth camps for the enjoyment of our youth, all operated by volunteer members.

I am sorry, but what we don't have is perfect people. We all make mistakes, we all make misjudgements but we do have a church structure supporting and encouraging us to become better people, better friends and neighbours.

A 2016 study, of 10 various church congregations studied the financial and social impacts on their neighbourhoods. It found that the value to the community was about 4-5 times the organizations yearly operating budget.

"For example, if you removed a congregation with a \$250,000 annual budget, the very conservative estimates of the study suggest you would need about \$1.2 million every year to sustain their economic contribution to the community." I would think that you could safely extrapolate that to the adding of a congregation.

This same study used a matrix of 41 common economic and market measures, broken down into 7 main areas. Open space, direct spending, education, the magnet effect, individual impacts, community development, social capital and care.

Their conclusion, by placing a value on each, "concludes that far from being a drain on local municipalities, faith bases congregations provide critical support for existing municipal investments and are an essential part of healthy functioning communities."

For more information, you can go to: <http://www.haloproject.ca>

So what can this deal offer?

It can offer a manageable, beautifully constructed subdivision that realistically can and will be developed.

It can offer a guarantee that development will occur and will occur in a timely manner.

It can offer a solution to a piece of town property that cannot get developed other ways.

It can offer an example of a neighbourhood that could be duplicated by a developer on empty lands adjacent to the east. If a developer has success with 13 lots and homes, he is going to pursue additional projects.

It can offer 100-150 people once or twice a week contributing to the economics of the town.

It can offer 13 residential openings for families to move into the town of Onoway.

It can provide some life and hope for the town that might be helpful.

I spoke at length with Mr. Gordy Vaughn. I agreed with him that this town and the residents need to show added hope and spirit in the community. This is the opportunity to do so.

I also spoke with Mr. Kwasny at his home. I agreed with him that having true and accurate information is the key to making a good decision.

In summary, in the interest of the future of the Town of Onoway, I feel I have presented my submission accurately and ask Council to approve the application so that this development can be the start of new and positive initiatives in the town.

Thank you for your time and considerations.

GARTH HATCH SUBMISSION

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