

July 11, 2023: Transcript of remarks by five members of Tantramar Town Council who spoke in favour of zoning changes that would clear the way for the six-storey, 71-unit apartment building proposed by JN Lafford Realty.

Councillor Josh Goguen: "Over the last few months I've heard strong differentiating opinions on the rezoning request of 131 [Main Street]. Being a younger member of the council, I can't help but look at my 13-year-old child and consider the very real possibility that if things continue on their current path, he will not be able to find affordable, well-maintained place to live in town. We're currently at a cross roads where we can continue with status quo which isn't working or move forward with the intention of revitalizing Tantramar. Our downtown core is dying and we have the power to help it. In recent years, we've had two major fires that left gaping holes in our downtown resulting in various business closures without the chance to rebuild and reopen. The proposed development will host 71 families increasing the population close to downtown. These families can easily access what amenities are available by foot or by car. Furthermore, regarding building materials, concrete is more durable than wood. It lasts two to three times longer reducing the need for new builds. The fact that it retains heat in the winter and increases cooling in the summer makes for more energy efficient homes thus reducing our impact on the environment. The economic impact is also one not to overlook. This will bring new people into the downtown that will want to shop and use services available. I understand that this location is not ideal, but where is? Every place that could potentially place a building of this magnitude could have issues. We have a unique opportunity; we have a developer whose from our community and willing to invest and we should be welcoming this. That being said, based on all the information we've received from Plan 360, the P-R-A-C, [the Southeast Planning Review and Adjustment Committee] I will vote in favour of this change."

Councillor Allison Butcher: As Councillor Goguen has stated, over the past month or two we've heard all kinds of people from both sides of this. I've thought a lot about it. I know that there are some very valid concerns about a lot of things. I am also well aware that there is a process through the planning commission to ensure that a lot of the things that our community members are concerned about, that those things are met and dealt with. So, some of the things that people are concerned about, valid concerns, will be dealt with at another step [and] that is not the step we're at now. I also know that change is difficult and over 30 years ago, there were many, many of our community members who really didn't think we should have a co-op housing in the area that we do and now, 30 years later, everyone is quite thrilled that it's there. So I think that we need to move forward. Our community needs housing, all housing. The last time a fairly large building went up in this area that was the same landlord, it opened up 29 personal homes to be sold as those people downsized and moved into that building. I think that with the housing crisis the way it is now and our downtown core the way it is now, we're in a crisis situation and we need to move forward with the possibility of having any new housing in our area that we can, so I'll be voting in favour of this.

Councillor Michael Tower: I will be voting in favour of this motion also. I feel that the housing development is really needed. We need developers who will be able to feel confident that they can come and talk to us, give us good examples of what they're trying to achieve. I know of at

least two people in Moncton who are looking forward to move back to Sackville when this thing gets built. I know someone who is very close to the site that is waiting to be able to move into one of those buildings. You take into consideration that we could have a nursing school here. They're going to need accommodations. This will open up many houses as Councillor Butcher has said, but at the same time, we also know that there are at least two house owners who are waiting for this to happen. I've been approached about this by two other people who wanted more information on it which I gave to them, but you consider that AIL has hired new employees, how many more they will hire we don't know. With all this pressure going on, we are going to have to find ways to build. We need developers. Who's going to develop where Joey's was? We need somebody to be able to step up there. Developers aren't rushing in. Maybe it's because of some of the roadblocks we put up. So I think it's time now that we put our faith in a developer especially one like John Lafford. He's worked extremely hard with the planning commission, I've had discussions with Lori [Bickford], questioned this that and everything else and she's told me some of the things that she's brought up to him and he has worked around to make sure that he falls within requirements. We have to trust the process from that point onwards. They've done the testing of the soil below so it's a matter of a concrete building, if we have a fire, the fire department has said that with a sprinkler system in there, it's going to take care of that fire and that they have a lot less concern about how high their ladders go because of the fact that it is a concrete building and we know from the past that this man builds quality buildings in his property. So to turn our back on somebody who's invested so deeply in our community, I think would be wrong and I think it's time that we try to find ways to improve all these aspects.

Councillor Allison Butcher: (later comment) Sorry, I realize I had my turn. I just wanted to clarify something that Councillor Tower said because it's true, it will be a concrete construction and it's true that it will have a sprinkler, but it sort of implied that our ladder is not tall enough, but it is. So, not only is it a concrete construction and a sprinkler system installed, but we do have equipment that will reach up to the top. So, I just wanted to clarify that as well.

Deputy Mayor Greg Martin: I will be voting in favour of the motion and I think the reason why I'm getting to this point is I, like all of the members of council I'm sure, have been swamped by differences of opinions, e-mails, sometimes as many as a dozen a day with different opinions, but I think that we have to move forward. I'm not going to go through all the reasons because they've been said by the other councillors and they've touched all the points that I was thinking. Being new to council, I appreciate the process that got us to this because, at the beginning, I had no idea where and what I was going to vote, how I was going to vote. But I've had time to talk to a lot of people and some of my favourite friends at Tim Hortons have given me opinions on both sides. So I really think that we have to move forward and move on with this vote.

Mayor Andrew Black: I just want to say well said from the councillors who spoke. I agree with everything that's said. I'm not going to repeat that. But I will say that housing is an issue everywhere across the nation. If you couldn't find housing in one town and you said 'Well I'll just go and move to another town,' you're not going to find housing in that town either. You can

look to Moncton, for example. Mr. Lafford is building buildings in Moncton as well. Those buildings are going to be full. There is an absolute shortage of housing all across this nation and if we have an opportunity to build it in town safely, securely with a wonderful build that is supportive of the community, I think that we need to take advantage of that and for many of the reasons that people have stated already.