

From: [Dan Berty](#)
To: [Paula Banks](#)
Cc: [Mary Ellen Truelove](#); lambtrax@outlook.com; lmacarr393@gmail.com; 73sued@gmail.com; jeffreybanks@gmail.com
Subject: Re: Portland library and hall - strong disagreement with direction being taken
Date: Tuesday, August 22, 2023 7:18:51 PM

Councilor Paula Banks,

Thank you for your two very prompt responses to my email of yesterday evening. I'm just back from the Portland library / hall Open House. Very informative. It's a shame you couldn't be present but I understand you are on vacation, yet finding time to respond to me, which is appreciated.

One observation from the Open House is that there will likely be additions to the plans driven by asks (many post it sheets suggestions) of Portland residents. Given recent meetings, I'm dubious that council, driven by the block of 5 councilors copied here, will say no to many of these "asks". This will likely push the total build to around \$3.5M (including architectural work).

Your first response of 10:40pm last night (copied below and in blue) dealt with Council being unable to revisit the motion passed on scrapping the HUB plans.

--- PAULA BANKS 1st EMAIL TO D. BERTY, RESPONDING TO HIS INITIAL EMAIL ---

Sent: Monday, August 21, 2023 at 10:50:19 p.m. EDT

Subject: Re: Portland library and hall - strong disagreement with direction being taken

A motion for the HUB cannot be brought back to the table under our current bylaws.

Council has agreed to look at the staff offices in 2024.

Thanks

In fact, as I suggested in my initial email to this group of councilors, there are provisions under section 19 of the township by-laws to reconsider motions passed by the current council. I specifically draw your attention to sections 19.21 through 19.22.

19.21 A motion of reconsideration applies only to a matter previously decided by the current Council. A new Council may review any matter decided by a previous Council, provided contractual agreements or obligations have not been completed.

19.22 A motion for reconsideration of a decided matter shall not be considered when any part of the motion has been substantially implemented, or legally binding commitments are in place, or no new information on the decided matter has been provided on the date on which the motion to reconsider is to be debated.

19.23 A motion for reconsideration shall be made in writing and provided on the agenda under New Business to provide Notice of Motion and shall pass with 2/3 member support.

Given you were incorrect your email to me with your blanket statement that the HUB cannot be brought back to the table under our current bylaws, since 19.23 indicates 2/3 member support is required the terms of 19.22 are satisfied, I am assuming that

a) you are speaking for the group of 5 councilors. (In the same way as you recently noted in a council meeting that you and Jeff decided to vote a certain way).

b) in so doing, you are stating unequivocally, that you and then other 4 members of the group of 5 will use your voting block power to ensure the HUB is never brought back, even if the conditions of 19.22 are met.

--> Are a) and b) correct?

I note that you chose not to respond to other points I made. My points include:

- Staff retention and morale
- Proper budgeting and planning to finance the municipal offices
- How the total costs of municipal offices (say \$3.5M realistically) PLUS the Portland library (\$3.5M) PLUS a contingency of \$500,000 - \$1M - total \$7.5M or \$8M is less where the HUB alone would be. You don't refute that the expected 20-25% overage claimed on HUB estimates by Mr. Banks was an was excessive.

Not addressing these points is fine of course, but suggests to me that you do not feel them relevant, indeed you seem to imply only your points are relevant. This is a prudent political tactic, but not one that provides transparency which is always appreciated by tax payers.

With respect to your many reasons why you voted no, I have responded to them below with edit insertions to your email prefixed by *** Dan:

Thank you for your (and that of your fellow 4 other councilor's) time on this matter.

Dan Berty

CC: Mary Ellen Truelove, Clerk, Rideau Township - to add to the inclusion of my earlier correspondence (including my comments below), in the next Full Council Meeting.

----- PAULA BANKS 2nd EMAIL TO D, BERTY, RESPONDING TO HIS INITIAL EMAIL ----

On Tuesday, August 22, 2023 at 01:06:50 p.m. EDT, Paula Banks <paulainpolitics@hotmail.com> wrote:

TRL HUB should be put to bed now.

The attacks continue on only FIVE of the now 6 + councilors that support the Hall in Portland instead of the HUB. I was asked again why I do not support the HUB so I will share what I shared during my campaign.

***Dan: My email was not an attack. It was providing points and observations. No slanderous or other rude/derogatory comments were made. It was written in the spirit of public engagement; something I have seen and heard you ask for - including in your point around surveys below.

My reasons for not supporting the HUB are the same with one added. I was told recently by a B&B resident that they want the HUB now to be built on the Galigher property because they do not want to sell it. Why would they not want to sell it now after fighting to so hard? My guess is they do not want tax payers to know the low appraisal value? If what my opposing candidate said is true and it was only appraised at \$150,000 residential and \$160,000 commercial no wonder they do not want that out.

*** Dan: I am not sure who the "they" are. If you are suggesting this is other council members, I suggest it be brought up in council as part of the funding discussions and planning for the new Portland Library / Hub. Beyond that I am confused, as I do not know who they are. This ambiguous approach does not lend itself to meaningful dialogue and in my opinion confuses it. Not sure if you are intending this though.

So why is the old guard so aggressively attacking new councilors relentlessly to now change the location of the HUB build?

*** Dan: Not sure what the "old guard" is. And there is no "HUB build" to change the location of. I really don't understand this statement. I am a resident of Rideau Lakes for 6 years now. I don't think I'm old guard by any stretch of reasonable definition of "old guard". Maybe you didn't mean me though? I'm very confused.

I will be asking for the appraisal on this property to be made public. If we paid around \$360,000 according to the unsigned flyer? The lot was not for sale and only assessed for \$265,000 at the time. Maybe it is not the new councils motives tax payers should be questioning.

The majority of council NOT just FIVE has begged the mayor and his handful of supporter to stop the bullying and attacks maybe the only way to stop this is to be transparent about why they are doing it?

*** Dan: Yes you are 100% correct but that was because the HUB was defeated. Are you suggesting that councilors should vote against any and all related subsequent motions when the one they were in favor of was defeated? This the only conclusion I can make from your statement.

Why I do not support the HUB from prior to winning my seat.

*** Dan: Why not respond with thinking now that you are on council and presumably need to not just get "elected" but use the seat you have to more thoroughly and thoughtfully address the fullness of the issues. You were good at getting people riled up in Portland. Very good. Now the township as a whole has to wear it. You seem not to care about that. Only Portland matters to you from my perspective.

Why I oppose 8+ Million-dollar HUB in Portland

Our Debt:

While the total debt burden has decreased slightly to around \$6 million, debt servicing costs of 10% have not decreased significantly. Our fiscal position is deemed to be high-risk by the province.

*** Dan: Mr. Banks is on record numerous times publicly stating our fiscal position is improving.

The assumption of revenue from some items, I find very questionable. By assuming we will have development charges to a big one at 1.2 million in future reserves. I do not see this materializing. I feel we could be coming into a economic downturn in the near future. The recent closing of Canopy Growth in Smiths Falls and the loss of about 350 jobs justifies that as well as the lack of building permits so far this year.

***Dan: Fair point BUT Hershy looks to be coming back. The Mayor of Smith Falls is very optimistic. Moreover, growth on new builds in Rideau Lakes continues in 2023 at a record pace. I know first-hand from my neighbor who rents that many US based frequent annual victors have returned. I'm sure their experience is far from alone - indeed this is one of the reasons many campgrounds want to expand. Rideau Ferry store (on the other side of the bridge) is having a banner year.

The second I do not see materializing is the rebate from the province at \$160,000 yearly for producer responsibility Blue Boxes in 2025. . I would love to see this happen and I am hopeful it will but I do not want to our debt servicing any worse based on empty promises.

*** Dan: Okay - but \$160K is a pittance in the costs we are talking about. You say the council will address town offices next year. As I pointed out, and you regularly ask for, multi-year planning, especially on capital projects, is critical. Yet, you refuse to add council office costs into the broader financial discussion because, I suggest, it is convenient to ignore as the Portland hall/library is pushed forward.

This project will also consume most of our borrowing capacity and leave less funding for work needed in other areas of Portland, Delta, and the rest of the ward.

**** Dan: Exactly the same point as above. And by the way its not just your ward. As a taxpayer, this is a MAJOR concern. I am VERY VERY VERY certain many others, at least in the Rideau Ferry area have like concerns.

Lastly the \$278,000 other sources. What are the other sources? With a one time tax increase of 2.35% that will built in the base for future increases.

Building for the future:

The new HUB will not accommodate all the staff, so some are being left in Chantry. A building Council say's is substandard and requires major renovations. When will we get an actual cost for this work, will we need to borrow more money and when will this work need to be completed?

How many staff will be hired in the next 10 years? I feel that staff will outgrow this complex sooner than they realize.

*** Dan: What? I'm assuming you are speaking to the defeated Portland HUB. Exactly how many staff are we talking about. Yes, that should be a consideration. By

Also, again, why are you not actively speaking to the costs of municipal offices as part of long-term planning. Its a simple answer, again - it will cause reconsideration of the previous HUB design or a new HUB.

Lot conditions:

The lot preparation costs are exorbitant for this two-story structure. The lot is also less than an acre in size and they want it to accommodate a hall, 29 offices, library, parking, and septic. For a single dwelling in Rideau Lakes, council requires one full acre. This intensity of use so close to the water would not be approved for any other developer in my opinion. There are also several environmental concerns still not addressed or costed.

*** Dan: I have a hard time with this. Are you suggesting the engineering work for the build would not be able to address the architectural design? How much of this is based on fact versus your opinion. We will never know because the HUB is canned.

Opposition from Portland Residents:

Support for the project among many residents in the Village of Portland has been lost due to poor communication and lack of clarity about the process of gathering public input from the start. The very first public meeting had residents seeing large complexes sitting on their private ancestral properties with no forewarning. Now we hear council often using words like angry, divided and indecisive to describe these same residents. If I thought the township was going to expropriate my private home, I would also be angry.

**** Dan: Why speak of expropriation? Nothing is being expropriated. That is an extreme comparison. I am certain of at least several residents who were more that excited about the hub prospect. But they were also afraid to express this due to the emotion of other residents. Some of this fear was whipped up by the bi-election. Let's also be reminded that our Mayor ran on the HUB and won by a sizable margin. He represents ALL of Rideau Lakes. Portland does not. The HUB is a mix of local and Rideau Lakes issues. I get that you wish to make this ONLY about Portland, but as I pointed out earlier, the net impact financially of leaving he offices out of the picture, with no plan, makes it about all Rideau Lakes.

I have asked council several times to do some surveys of the whole township to get feedback from all stakeholders without even so much as a response in return. I'm dumbfounded how the can utilize surveys for other issues such as naming private roads, naming a park or even the CIP yet they refuse to consider it for an 8+ million-dollar infrastructure project that taxpayers will be paying for up to 25 years.

**** Dan: Well, in watching most meetings, I did see discussions and a motion on local meetings around what people want regarding HUB (even if not in Portland) and these were voted down by the group of 5. Indeed, at that time you used the term "laughable" to address the mayor's motion. So, I think there are many to blame on council here for not seeking public input. Your point is true but doesn't really state the facts fully. In fact, I think most councilors want public input if it will solidify their views on things but not if it shows otherwise.

Proposed Solution:

To purchase acreage near Portland or along HWY 15, there are two current properties available right now. The cost would be significantly less than the stated cost of the lot preparation alone, in the proposed HUB location. This acreage would accommodate some of the following future possibilities - A Municipal Office, a fire station, a seniors' home, or garage for heavy equipment... land and buildings we can grow into, not out of as our Township moves forward.

**** Dan: I am not sure what you are specifically saying. What properties? Have studies been done on appropriate fit for the uses you noted? Are they suitable? Forgive me, but you aren't an engineer or

architect that I am aware of. Wouldn't the township want to have a sense of suitability and related risk issues before purchasing such acreage?

I thought the Township already had a location for the new fire station? If not, how could architectural plans be done to the level they are already (yes, changes are coming) if the property has not been acquired? Are you saying you want it moved elsewhere?

On the fire station, I'm assuming the council has factored in and budgeted for the costs of the extra bay. These extra costs are driven by the cost of the extra bay itself and the likely reduction in insurance money settlement as a result of adding this bay. To do otherwise would be unreasonable because the reduction in insurance money is almost a sure thing (or there will be litigation costs to go after the insurer). Has this been done and for how much?

Build the Hall/ Library and park that were demolished in Portland as soon as possible and when our debt servicing is deemed less than high risk build an Office Complex with a design and enough property to expand as our population grows.

**** Dan: This adds clarity to your thinking. I guess since no time line for new offices, and your other comments on finances imply waiting numerous years for new offices, you are fine with the issues the Township's staff face including reasonable working space, brought in drinking water, and to pay the likely significant repair and maintaince costs for a building that has outlived its useful life. As we grow (your terms), and the earlier suggestion that staff will grow. This wait for years strategy seems flawed. I wonder if this is part of why Mike Dywer as a leader of staff, resigned? And why, as I suspect you would find out if staff engagement was surveyed, you would be find a very unsettled and unhappy group. As I said, the group of five councilors own this and the likely ramifications to come.

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From: Paula Banks <paulainpolitics@hotmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 22, 2023 12:50:16 PM

To: Dan Berty <dan.berty@yahoo.ca>; jeffreyjbanks@gmail.com <jeffreyjbanks@gmail.com>; 73sued@gmail.com <73sued@gmail.com>; lambtrax@outlook.com <lambtrax@outlook.com>; lmacarr393@gmail.com <lmacarr393@gmail.com>

Cc: mtruelove@rideaulakes.ca <mtruelove@rideaulakes.ca>

Subject: Re: Portland library and hall - strong disagreement with direction being taken

A motion for the HUB cannot be brought back to the table under our current bylaws.

Council has agreed to look at the staff offices in 2024.

Thanks

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From: Dan Berty <dan.berty@yahoo.ca>

Sent: Tuesday, August 22, 2023 11:48:42 AM

To: jeffreyjbanks@gmail.com <jeffreyjbanks@gmail.com>; 73sued@gmail.com <73sued@gmail.com>; paulainpolitics@hotmail.com <paulainpolitics@hotmail.com>; lambtrax@outlook.com <lambtrax@outlook.com>; lmacarr393@gmail.com <lmacarr393@gmail.com>

Cc: mtruelove@rideaulakes.ca <mtruelove@rideaulakes.ca>

Subject: Portland library and hall - strong disagreement with direction being taken

Councilors,

I've been watching council proceedings closely since before last fall's election. This includes all council meeting videos and most committee videos. I've also been in touch with the Treasurer who has promptly and graciously provided financial information over the last 2 months.

Having visited the Township offices in Chantry a couple times, I was not surprised to hear how council was wanting to make substantial improvements to reflect a modern and safe (I refer to drinking water), setting for staff to work in and the public to visit.

I was EXTREMELY disappointed that council (the five on this email), following the bi-election that saw Paula Banks get elected, voted in a rushed manner, to kill the project. It was clear to me the process by which this took place was calculated to ensure it was done with one council member (who was in favor) was not present for this vote.

Many council meetings include how Chantry is in need of material repairs, outlived its life in its current state, and is not hospitable in any reasonable manner to staff. Indeed, a report commissioned by council at the time and shared with me entitled "FUNCTIONAL AND CODE ASSESSMENT/FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT (of) EXISTING CHANTRY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE BUILDING dated July 13, 2021 by "VG The Ventin Group Architects; states in its conclusions:

"The existing facility was retrofitted through various renovations to better suit the needs of the Township, but can no longer adequately accommodate the townships needs without a carefully planned renovation and expansion of the existing facility. Given the age and location of the existing building in the township, we do not perceive any economic benefit to the ratepayers of the municipality in undertaking a renovation of the existing administrative offices.

Relocation would provide a long-term solution for the Township. It would provide the opportunity to design a flexible facility to strategically accommodate future growth. The Township of Rideau Lakes can leverage a welcoming, highly productive, and universally accessible municipal administration building to attract a talented workforce to serve the community into the future."

Despite this, none of the councilors I am writing to have spoken in any meaningful way about what will be done to resolve the town office problems.

Instead, the focus has been on a \$3M build (often quoted by several of you) for the Portland Hall and Library. Yet, the \$3M is based on at best guesses, to date, there has been nothing provided by staff to substantiate this amount. It is likely lowballed by to get the project done. Indeed, several of you even engaged in debate recently on if the process could be rushed more to get shovels in the ground sooner. All the while, as you see below constantly restating estimates that were never formally done for the hub because the guestimates were too high and would balloon.

Here is an example: In an email from Jeff Banks to me on June 6, 2023 he states the estimates for the hub are "8.2 million and maybe could go to 9 or 10 million". My understanding was staff were suggesting around \$7.5M with several of you repeatedly and publicly stating that it will balloon to 10M or beyond, but provided no basis for these assertions. I call that scare mongering.

I assume you are all aware that the, not including considerable time and efforts by staff (meaning they didn't work on other things), township has spent a total of \$330,861 (\$64,742 in 2021 + \$240,730 in 2022 + \$25,389 in 2023) on the hub project you cancelled (information provided by Malcolm Norwood to me via email on June 14th at my request). That is a LOT of money to spend on NOTHING! A total waste. I'm not happy about this at all.

Jeff Banks also repeatedly stated the Township (aka staff) should be able to download library / hall plans from like projects and just apply them. This implied no cost or next to now cost. This was used to substantiate his further assertions that there was no need for these high-priced consultants. Really? I can't believe that none of you challenged this nonsense which was repeated several times (I can get the dates and times on video if you like). What about environmental review, fit for accessibility, water and

septic, foundation engineering, etc etc etc - all of which are different for any new location (and more involved for rural locations). Most of you sit on the planning committee - it suggests you have at least a modest awareness of such matters? Senior staff including Mike Dywer, commented very politely, that Mr. Banks comments and suggestions (repeated over several meetings) overly simplistic and not practical. But I guess it was dismissed, since the remaining 4 of you never challenged Mr. Banks on this. Why not? Other councilors did.

Let's for a moment consider what will have to be done to deal with the Chantry location. The architects say it's not worth retrofitting. In more simplistic and not practical comments, 've heard Mr. Banks repeatedly say we can add a 2nd floor or extend the ground floor. This goes against the advice offered by the expertise the township paid for. So why suggest it? Again, I ask, why do the other four of you not challenge Mr. Banks on these statements. Because you never have, I must assume that collectively you feel architects are not professionally qualified to offer this advice?

Let's say, realistically the Portland library/hall is \$4M in 2023 dollars (not 2020, 2021, or 2022 dollars). And let's say a new town hall building is, realistically, another \$4M. Simple math - we are at or close to \$8M. That's the reality. But year after year operating, upkeep, and maintenance costs on 2 buildings will be 25-50% more than a single building (the hub) - this is not debatable. So, if the hub was realistically \$8M, it's a wash against where the council is heading. Related debt costs are the same between two buildings vs the hub alone. So, the convoluted debt arguments offered by some of you are wrong. AND there are ongoing material savings on operating, upkeep, and maintenance costs. Has this even been considered? Not from any discussion I've heard in meetings. No wait, staff did point this out but no one from this group seemed to pay attention.

Lots has been vocalized by this group of councilors that the people of Portland "don't want a hub". They only want "a hall and library". This appears to be because of a perception of extra traffic into the village that is unwelcome. Yet, I understand many of these same residents are looking to encourage more commercial activity and wish to have public washrooms built using the Gallagher property acquired by the township (but NOT in the so-called library / hub) so as to encourage boaters to visit. Was there a study done on traffic increases? No. What will the washroom facilities cost to build/renovate into Gallagher? Why wouldn't this be built into the library / hall? What will be the additional cost of maintaining these washrooms annually? How come none of this has been discussed in council. It seems like the people of Portland are listened too (almost at the exclusion of the rest of Rideau Lakes) quite extensively by the 5 of you.

The concerns on "too much traffic" if there is a hub in Portland needs to be dealt with realistically not emotionally. And if legit, then build the hub and library on property just outside the village. Just because there was a hall in the village before doesn't mean it has to stay in the same place.

I appreciate passion in people. I also appreciate a good debate. But being respectful of each other is paramount. There have been repeated meetings in 2023 when, especially around this theme, I've seen disrespect exhibited toward other councilors and staff. This is especially true for Mr. Banks, Mrs. Banks and occasionally Debbie Hutchings (who has apologized a couple times).

I am aware of the circulating pamphlets from some concerned citizens on wasted money as a result of the hub decision by the 5 of you. I have also seen where Paula Banks and Jeff Banks have made categorical statements on Paula Bank's "Paula in Politics" Facebook pages (prints of which I have) around how incorrect the information presented in the pamphlet is and that our mayor is behind it. Curiously, neither of you state that the money spent on the hub wasn't wasted. Nor do you address the Chantry issues that remain outstanding and are VERY material. But you do, as bullies often do, question the integrity of those involved with the concerned citizen activity. Moreover, you both imply that those involved have no business voicing their opinions and informing others, because the decision has been made to go with the library and hall solution. Finally, what evidence do you have that our Mayor is associated with this group? I can't help but feel comments like these will only make the council more adversarial and confrontational.

Mike Dwyer is an outstanding CAO. This is more than evident from his council meeting participation -

including in the strategic planning exercise. His resignation is a big loss to Rideau Lakes. I've talked to neighbors and others in the township - all are disappointed and concerned. No one leaves a \$150K job without a plan B at his age - and no plan B were his words. So why did he resign? The answer is pretty clear to me - he didn't feel valued, he felt council did not value his staff's contributions and professional standings, and his professional integrity did not allow him to continue in his role based on the direction that council is heading. Since the council effectively is the 5 of you with your voting bloc, this is a message to you from Mr. Dywer. I am upset about this and you own it! I strongly suspect staff morale was already low. Mike's resignation will make it worse. You own this too. Recruiting a good replacement will be more than challenging and not because our mayor was on Lake 88 or because of the pamphlet noted above, but because the CAO community (especially rural CAO community) is small... and word gets around. You can bet that Rideau Lakes is seen as toxic at the council level. Because it is. You own this too and are making it worse.

Based on the above you know how I feel. So, statements in meetings that you never or almost never hear disagreement with council decisions is not accurate. Please refrain from saying these things.

I have watched the most recent meetings. I am aware that only the council can reopen the closed hub issue when "more information is presented". "More information" is not really defined that well and this was witnessed in discussions with staff and the clerk in a recent meeting. So, the argument that the council can't change its mind on the hub is hogwash. Council can. And it should. Changing your mind is the correct move. Otherwise, I can read the tea leaves - much worse is to come - and you will own that too.

Dan Berty,
[REDACTED], Lombardy, Rideau Lakes

CC: Mary Truelove, Clerk, Rideau Lakes with request that this be entered into the Township's correspondence record and tabled at the next full Council meeting