

# Richardson seeks to buy Frontier House

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time, however, he announced the possibility of obtaining a \$3 million state Department of Transportation grant. The money, if awarded, would go to the Village of Lewiston. The municipality would lease the Frontier House from Hastings, Hastings would lease it back, and the building would become accessible to the public and a place for community events.

Residents in attendance seemed interested in that idea. As expected, though, they still voiced opinions in favor of leaving the Frontier House and surrounding land as is.

Jennifer Lutman of Ridge Street, who lives across from the proposed condominium site, expressed concern over an influx of vehicles.

"There are seven children living on Ridge Street," she said. "The amount of traffic is going to be horrendous."

Eva Nicklas, who serves as artistic director for the Lewiston Council on the Arts, said a condo complex is inconsistent with a historic village.

"The Frontier House is an irre-

placeable jewel that should be the centerpiece of an historic neighborhood," she said. "Look at any town or city that has used its history to attract visitors ... you will not find brand new condominiums in the middle of their historic districts."

"Mr. Hastings' proposal is not consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood," Nicklas said. "It does nothing to preserve the historical integrity of the Frontier House or the Lewiston community. ... Mr. Hastings has not exactly been, I'm sorry, a good steward of this amazing building."

Hastings was not amused by Nicklas' comments. Since the intent of the meeting was to offer residents information, he told Planning Board Chairman Vic Eydt to take control of the crowd and curtail commentary. Eydt's colleague, Kristin Gamble, asked those in attendance to remain professional, and said "Nothing is gained by tempers."

Kupinski said Hastings' intent is to clean up the mess he inherited when McDonald's pulled out of the Frontier House in late 2005.

"(The vision is to) make it ac-

cessible; to restore it to the way it was, and get rid of the McDonald's that was left in there," he said. "The goal is to bring the Frontier House back to life; to bring people back in."

In order to finance the restoration, Kupinski said 27 condominiums would have to be built and sold. The total project cost is an estimated \$13 million.

"You can't reflect the past unless you move forward," he said.

As Eydt was about to close the public information session, Richardson spoke up. He said Hastings' plan would increase his bottom line.

"I think if Mr. Hastings builds that building, it will increase the value of my property by \$2-to-\$3 million," he said.

However, such construction would "hinder" the historic character of the village, lessen activities and, in his opinion, cost Lewiston upwards of \$50 million over the next two decades.

So, Richardson suggested, residents should form a community association and take over the building. He asked Hastings how much it would cost to buy the Frontier

House and the developer, playing along, said \$2 million. Richardson said he would lay the fundraising foundation with \$100,000 from his own business.

"Reasonably, we can buy him out," Richardson said. "We can raise the money to buy it."

He suggested Nicklas be the chairwoman of an association in charge of the Frontier House.

In addition to the building, Richardson said the Frontier House lot, which Hastings has allowed the community to temporarily use for public parking, would become a permanent solution to the village's lack of spaces.

"That solves our parking problem," he said.

Richardson's comments were the last Eydt allowed and, as residents left the Red Brick Municipal Building, Hastings said he wasn't ready to sell his property.

"No, I wouldn't entertain any offer where Eva Nicklas is the chair," he said.

Twenty minutes later, at the conclusion of the Planning Board meeting, Richardson and Hastings were outside discussing the buyout plan.

Richardson said he's looking for "30 people, who really care about the village, to give \$50 a month over five years (for a total of a little more than \$1 million)."

Hastings commented on the meeting saying he didn't appreciate negative comments from residents who may not know he spends \$1,500 each month maintaining a parking lot everyone uses.

"I've been kind enough to let the village park there," he said. Moreover, he said he's spent money repairing the roof and the front porch while not receiving any income from the property.

Hastings said the building, which he valued at \$3.5 million, hasn't attracted many suitors.

"It's a damn, overtaxed structure that was condemned twice!" he said.

Richardson countered by saying "It won't be his problem once he sells it."

But, will Hastings ultimately agree to sell it if Richardson comes up with the money?

"Chances are not very good," Richardson said. "But, I'm willing to make the effort."

## Art district to be complete mid-summer

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Already, his two existing units are busy with activity. On Thursday, Linda Hankin opened her café and ice cream stand in the first building, which immediately borders Center and Fourth. The second structure, which sits next to The Brickyard, houses Pure Pilates, Marcella's Hair Studio and the returning Averill Gallery.

In total, the mall represents "My commitment that all these units are to be used by tenants whose primary business is arts, crafts, history," Richardson said.

That idea will continue in the third building. Richardson will lease 31, eight foot-by-eight foot spots - kiosks - to creative types.



An inside-the-promenade look at Herbert Richardson's art complex. (courtesy of Giusiana Architects and Engineer)

"It's like moving the Art Festival indoors year-round," he said.

The café and the new addition will connect. As such, those renting a booth will have the option of manning it personally or running

sales through the eatery, thus ensuring "We can always be open," Richardson said.

Over the course of the next year, a small theater or conference room (40 seats or less) will

be built on the latest building's second floor. Richardson said that space would be used for poetry, lectures and musical presentations.

## Artpark addresses public comments

Story and photo by Joshua Maloni

Lewiston Mayor Richard Soluri invited residents to hear what Artpark and Company president George Osborne and local police agencies have

planned in terms of crowd control for the upcoming "Tuesday in the Park" concert series.

In short, the answer is more of the same.

"All last summer, we came up with a winning plan," Lt. Patrick Moriarty of the New York State Parks Police said.

The dozen people sitting in the mayor's office agreed, though they expressed a desire to have the music played a little softer this summer.

Osborne said that's unlikely as the bands hired stipulate sound. That said, he noted Artpark has abided by village noise curfews.

He said "Tuesday in the Park" pays for family events and indoor presentations like last season's "Aida" and this August's "Beauty and the Beast."

"If you want this to continue, you'll have to put up with these quirks," Osborne said. "We brought something here that we think is successful. We're trying to work with the village."

"All these children's programs wouldn't happen without 'Tuesday in the Park,'" Osborne said. "It puts us on the map."

Maureen Kellick, Artpark's director of marketing and development, added, "Artpark brings so much more than



Village of Lewiston Mayor Richard Soluri, far right, listens to Artpark and Company President George Osborne.

just a weekly concert or two." Soluri agreed, saying, "This community is known all over Western New York and Southern Ontario - a lot of that is because of Artpark."

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