

Artist says compromises will be needed 'on both sides'

Continued from pg. 1

Bonnette said council made the decision to name the Gallery after Helson. "Council did that on its own. We made the decision because what a nice gift—he's been a patron of the arts, he's always donated to the Cultural Centre." He feels "everyone (at the meeting) agreed that the Helson collection is a wonderful gift to the Town."

The collection contains 105 works by artists such as Franklin Arbuckle, John William Beatty, Alfred Casson and Cornelius Krieghoff.

Bonnette said the intention is not to display all of Helson's items at once and council expects at some point to exchange artwork with other galleries.

He said the Town hopes to have a curator on board by the first week of March who will be consulting with all the artists. The Gallery is currently being renovated and tentatively slated to reopen March 2.

Bonnette said the artists were told at the meeting they "will be getting access to the Gallery" but on whether or not they can display their art on the walls he said, "we didn't say yes, we didn't say no."

"The reason being, there might be other ways, we're not experts—we don't want to say yes you get the walls and the curator comes out with some great ideas." The Town had been considering using movable displays to show local art.

"We gave them the commitment they will be able to use the Gallery and that was

the intention all along," said the mayor.

Artist Laura Kingsbury who was at the meeting said she feels the mayor and Fogal were "trying hard to convince us we are going to be included, but they just don't seem to want to commit and they don't seem to have a firm idea even in their own heads what direction they want to go."

"I think there are going to have to be compromises made on both sides," said Kingsbury. She said she would like to see large group displays being allowed on the walls of the Gallery, but maybe individual artists who were previously able to rent the Gallery may have to find other venues.

The artists to date have collected about 100 signatures on a petition calling for local art to be shown on the Gallery's walls.

But not all artists feel the same way the four artists do.

"I am constantly being asked by visitors to the library why *The Independent* fails to even mention the art display that is currently on the walls of the Cultural Centre. We have almost 50 artists of all media currently displaying their art, including two of the protesters. And after less than two weeks we had over \$1,500 in sales," said local artist Carolyn Martin.

Many have commented they think the display (in the lobby) is a better venue than the Gallery, Martin said.



LAURA KINGSBURY

meeting 7 p.m. Tuesday.

"There has been a great deal of confusion about what the Town has done so far, and more importantly what the Town intends to do," said Bonnette. Everyone is invited to attend to hear the presentation slated for early in the agenda.

"We hope to do a better job at consultation, just not with these ladies (the four artists) but with all the art groups, the camera club and the rug hookers," said the mayor.

He said due to the "compressed timeline of receiving the (Helson) gift and trying to get the Gallery open we did move more quickly than we normally would."

When asked about email correspondence between Helson lawyer John Schaljo and the Town's Director of Recreation and Parks Terry Alyman dated Jan. 21 that quoted from the agreement between Helson and the Town, Bonnette said neither

himself or council was aware of that wording at the time the agreement was signed. Schaljo quoted from Section 9 stating, "the Gallery will no longer be available for the display of artwork by local artists."

"It's always been our intention that they (local artists) use the Gallery, you might want to talk to Terry (Alyman) about that," said the mayor.

"That was not the intent of the verbiage (to bar the artists)," said Alyman. "It was the exact opposite."

"The article needs to be read in its full context," said Alyman. But he said the agreement could not be released to the public, as it's a confidential legal matter.

Alyman said it was not the intent of either Helson nor the Town to have local artists' work banned from the Gallery, so last month he requested Schaljo put in writing Helson's interpretation.

"What you don't see, it was certainly our understanding that the Town was by no means restricted to have local artists in the Gallery," said Alyman.

Schaljo said in the letter "Mr. Helson has confirmed that he did not intend to ban displays of artwork by local artists from the Gallery. Rather, he encourages such displays, since they will complement the Selected Collection (and the Selected Collection will complement them.)"

Alyman said the Town didn't have a lawyer handle the agreement and Schaljo, who is often the Town's lawyer, was working for Helson.

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