

Presentation to Niagara Falls City Council, 10 September 2019

Kenneth Westhues

Mr. Mayor and Members of Council,

My name is Ken Westhues. I live at 5419 River Road. Thank you for permitting me to address you.

Routinely, people stand at this lectern asking you to enact some kind of by-law. I've come to ask you to direct your staff to enforce a by-law you enacted in 2015.


Unlike most by-laws, this one has not been enforced. That's why I'm here.

It is By-law 2015-51, "to regulate the development of an inn," Niagara Grandview Manor, owned by John Pinter, at the corner of Eastwood and River Road. This is the only by-law that authorizes Mr. Pinter to use any of his properties in our neighbourhood for a commercial purpose.

Otherwise, ours is a residential neighbourhood with a delightful mix of grand heritage homes and well-kept modest homes, owners and long-term renters, young families, empty nesters, singles. About 15 percent of residents operate legal bed and breakfasts in their homes.

I'm showing you the nine homes closest to the inn. Eight are owner-occupied, one of them a bed and breakfast. The ninth is long-term rentals owned by the couple next door.

Homes next door to Niagara Grandview Manor



**To the north:
single-family,
owner-occupied**



**To the west:
single-family,
owner-occupied**



**Two doors north of Niagara Grandview Manor,
single-family,
owner-occupied**



**Two doors west of Niagara Grandview Manor,
single-family,
owner-occupied**

Homes across the street from Niagara Grandview Manor



**3 at right single-family,
owner-occupied**

**Far left is long-term rental,
Owned by family next door**

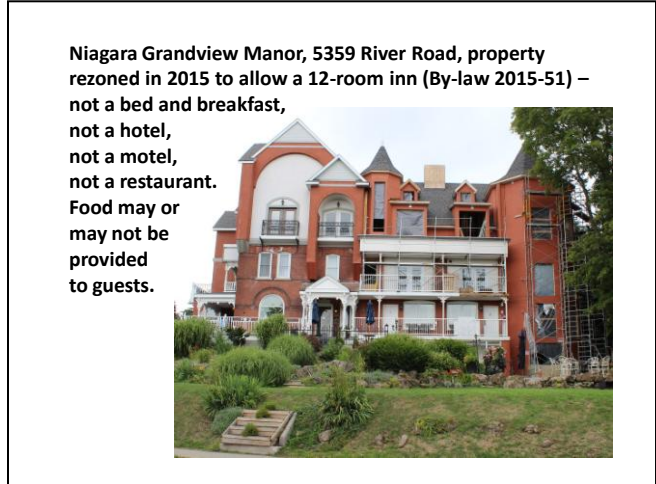


Serene Niagara

**Newly renovated bed and breakfast,
legal and licensed,
owner-occupied**

In the midst of these homes is Niagara Grandview Manor. By-law 2015-51 states that it is not a bed and breakfast, not a hotel, not a motel, not a restaurant, that it is an inn with up to 12 rooms, where guests may be provided with food.

Mr. Pinter has violated this law flagrantly for about three years. He has acquired at least six additional homes, all zoned residential, and illegally expanded the inn to include them, so that he rents not 12 but 25 or 30 rooms in what amounts to a multi-building motel.



He has given these homes commercial names, as shown on the slides. Mr. Pinter maintains a website called “Niagara Historic Inns” – plural – which he says “can sleep 65 persons.”



This map shows locations of the homes he has turned into his motel.

Plainly, Niagara Grandview Manor is one business on six properties. All guests register at the main building and eat a free breakfast there. Mr. Pinter assured the city last year “that only guests registered at Niagara Grandview Manor will be eating inside the facilities dining room.” That is true, no matter which of the six buildings, the one that is legal or the five that are not, the guests are staying in.



We in the River Road Heritage Neighbourhood do not want an illegal motel in our midst. Would any of you, Mr. Mayor or Councillors, want Mr. Pinter's business in your neighbourhood? No, you would do what eight residents of our neighbourhood did in May of 2017, almost two and a half years ago. In polite letters, we asked city staff to enforce By-law 2015-51, and limit Niagara Grandview Manor to 12 rooms on the one property where it is legal.

Our request was to no avail. We have been stonewalled and given the run-around on the issue ever since.

This evening I come with a petition signed by 34 residents asking that City Council "ensure immediate enforcement of By-law 2015-51. This by-law limits Niagara Grandview Manor to 12 rooms at one location, 5359 River Road, and excludes serving meals to anyone lodged elsewhere."

You may choose to take no action, to extend Mr. Pinter's free ride for another year or so, give him time to better establish his motel, perhaps take over more homes as he has already tried to do, or perhaps sell the multi-building business as he has already tried to do, meanwhile running more residents away from the neighbourhood, and further undermining its residential character.

But if one of you will make a motion to have the by-law enforced and the rest of you will pass it, you will do more than limit Niagara Grandview Manor to the one property where it is legal. You will send a message to your staff and to residents all across the city that you expect the by-laws you enact to be enforced evenhandedly without favouritism, a message also that you will keep residents of all residential neighbourhoods safe from illegal commercial intrusion.