

Ex-mayor complains:

City stalling on wharf repairs

by CLIFF BOULTIER

Former Halifax Mayor Leonard Kitz has accused city council of stalling on promised repairs to the Oakland Road Wharf on the North West Arm.

The 150-year-old wharf was unceremoniously cut adrift by the city two years ago after some of Kitz's Rockcliffe Street neighbors complained that pleasure-seekers were violating the quiet of their south end community.

The city's response was to deny access to the wharf by erecting a 'Closed' sign at the entrance to Rockcliffe St.

"Many of the residents did not want people parking cars in front of their houses. But for people to object to the wharf primarily on these grounds is painfully selfish," the distinguished lawyer told The Daily News.

"I think it is rather ironic that many of these neighbors are professional people themselves, whose house guests park in front of my house. I do not object. I do feel it is a crying shame that the wharf was closed in the first place."

Since its closure, the wharf has deteriorated to the point where Kitz says it has become a hazard and an eyesore.

"I've lived here for the past 30 years. Even as a child I remember walking on the wharf. Today, the site is a serious danger to anyone who walks along the shore of the arm.

"In legal jargon, the thing is a trap, and I know I wouldn't want my grandchildren or other people to be

concerns and expects to meet city officials soon to discuss things further. But he wonders aloud if all council members want to do is talk.

"Repairs have been talked about several times now. The item is one proposed for the upcoming capital budget. But, no, I can't understand the stalling."

As for the closure of the street, Kitz maintains that the city acted arbitrarily, without formal notices and public hearings. He has asked the city solicitor for an opinion with regard to the legality of the closure.

"I would like to know whether an emergency which could be corrected in two weeks would be a defence to a situation extending two years."

Ward four Ald. Nick Meagher, who last year brought council's attention to the wharf's sorry state of repair, insists there is no undue delay.

"No, we're not dragging our feet. We can't just turn around and say to a contractor, 'All right, here is \$50,000, go build us a wharf.' City staff has to look into this thing."

To this, the former mayor responds angrily, "All I am looking for is a boiled potato. The city is trying to serve up cauliflower with cheese."

Kitz says the project could be done for \$10,000 by building a new wharf over the old one without having to destroy the old one.

Kitz has even offered to transplant some of his prized forsythia and virginia creepers in an effort to get the city moving on repairs.

"Gardening is my hobby and I would gladly contribute, at my expense, to the

frustrated Kitz told The Daily News.

Meagher remains unconvinced. "If city staff tells me that this project is going to cost \$40,000 to \$60,000 then I would bet you it is going to cost that much."

Still, he remains confident that a compromise solution can be ironed out.

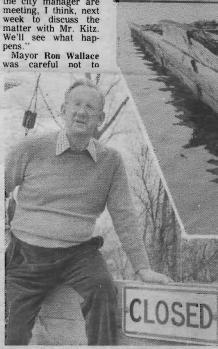
"Myself, Ald. (Rick) Grant (Ward 1), and the city manager are meeting, I think, next week to discuss the matter with Mr. Kitz. We'll see what happens."

Mayor Ron Wallace was careful not to

become embroiled in any controversy with his well-respected predecessor.

"I am, of course, aware of Mr. Kitz's concerns. The issue will be discussed with the budget and I really wouldn't like to comment beyond that."

The Oakland Road wharf (treasured city land) has been reduced to an eyesore. (Darrow)



FORMER Halifax mayor Len Kitz

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FORMER Halifax mayor Len Pitt

