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PHOTO COURTESY OF ROA STUDIO

Joe Gorzeman and Jenna Greydanus want to build a three or four storey hotel on the vacant property in downtown Petrolia. They hope to begin construction in the spring of 2019.

New Petrolia hotel proposed

Cathy Dobson
The Independent

A Petrolia couple hopes to open a new boutique hotel in the heart of Petrolia's downtown sometime in 2020.

Jenna Greydanus and Joe Gorzeman already own Crabby Joe's Bar and Grill on the main street and purchased a large vacant lot a few doors away where they want to build The Kingswell Hotel.

"Let's take back mainstreet downtown and make it beautiful and classy," said Gorzeman during a public meeting Aug. 12 to unveil the project.

"We have big hopes for a conference facility, a business centre, and maybe a wine bar in the hotel, too," says Greydanus.

About 45 people gathered at Crabby Joe's to hear about plans for The Kingswell, to be built on the north side of Petrolia Line between Manulife Securities and Total Hair

& Body Care. The lot has been empty since fire destroyed a bowling alley and damaged three adjacent buildings in 2004.

If all goes according to plan, a hotel with approximately 25 rooms, costing a minimum of \$2.5 million, will break ground in March.

The Kingswell will have three, possibly four storeys, says Gorzeman.

It's too early to say how many jobs will be created.

Height restrictions in Petrolia currently preclude a fourth storey but the developers may request an exemption to allow a structure 12 feet above the 40-foot limit to accommodate a recessed fourth floor, not visible from the street.

"I think it's gorgeous," says Petrolia Heritage committee member Dave Hext at the public meeting. Petrolia historically had many hotels on its main street including the Normandy Hotel that was located 115 years ago in the same location

where The Kingswell is slated.

"Hotels aren't new to Petrolia but something we've longed for a long time," said Hext.

Mayor John McCharles says this is the first time he can recall council being approached with a serious hotel proposal.

"The town should be extremely excited," he says. "This is something we need and want."

Petrolia is growing every year and approaching a population of 6,000, McCharles added. "It's becoming a destination for theatre and sports events. I just think this is wonderful news for the town."

Concept drawings created by ROA Studio in Chatham show a hotel front dominated by balconies, three across and three down with rod iron railings and a stone façade.

A proposed canapé encroaches over the sidewalk and requires an exemption from council.

The back of the hotel faces

SEE HOTEL PG 3

Petrolia council candidate faces criminal charge

Heather Wright
The Independent

A candidate for Petrolia Town Council faces a criminal charge over - according to his lawyer - a single piece of paper.

Marty Souch is one of nine people running for six spots on council.

In the last two years, Souch has been a vocal critic of the current council. In 2016, Souch began asking questions after seeing a town pickup truck smashed up on his way to work. He believed the accident happened off hours and may have been the result of alcohol consumption.

But then CAO Manny Baron and the town's lawyer investigated the incident and said there was no wrong doing.

Souch wasn't satisfied with the internal investigation and launched a Freedom of Information Act request to get the answers he wanted.

But ultimately, he didn't receive the documents he felt would prove his suspicions.

At the same time, another citizen went to the Lambton OPP with the same concern and an investigation was launched.

In a report to council Monday on the legal item which before then had been dealt with in camera, Clerk Mandi Pearson wrote:

"It has been confirmed to the town, by the OPP, that the investigation initiated by a town citizen regarding damage to a town vehicle is complete; That the town staff member has been cleared of all accusations, and any alleged wrong doing by the town has been fully cleared.

"The OPP further advised the town, that stemming from the

investigation a citizen has been charged under the Criminal Code."

Souch confirms he has been charged with obtaining by false pretence.

The Criminal Code explains the charge as: "a representation of a matter of fact either present or past, made by words or otherwise, that is known by the person who makes it to be false and that is made with a fraudulent intent to induce the person to whom it is made to act on it.

His lawyer, Gord Cudmore, says in laymen's terms "mis-leading someone to get some property.

"In this case, it's a piece of paper - a photocopy of a piece of paper," he says.

While the details of the criminal charge have yet to be presented in court, *The Independent* has learned the paper was a copy of a bill or estimate for the repair of the town truck in question.

Cudmore says the charge is "very rare" and he can't recall the last time one of his clients faced this charge.

"I don't understand it. I take it seriously but I don't understand why they (the OPP) are doing it. I will, as lawyers say, vigorously defend my client."

Cudmore adds the charge is an "unfair distraction" as Souch runs for council.

For his part, Souch says he'll continue to seek a seat on council. "I have told the truth and have been nothing but honest."

However it may be difficult, one of the conditions Souch is under as the charge goes to court is to stay out of town hall. Souch will be in court Aug. 27 to speak to the charge.

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