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Mayor cool to amusement park idea

By MICHAEL LIGHTSTONE Staff Reporter

Amusement park crusader John Assoun-Gritten said recently he pitched his idea for Pier Land to Halifax city hall officials last week. But the Dartmouth man didn't get the impression the municipality will be giving him much support.

He said he delivered his proposal for a local amusement park the size of Canada's Wonderland, an Ontario park, during a 30-minute meeting last week with Mayor Peter Kelly and city staff.

Mr. Assoun-Gritten, a father of three, envisions a site built somewhere along metro's shoreline.

What the mayor told him, Mr. Assoun-Gritten said, is that the city can't own anything like the proposed Pier Land.

"It's gotta be, like, a private thing," he said.

Mr. Assoun-Gritten has said the giant park could cost \$500 million to \$1 billion, with the money coming from both the private and public sectors. But he said he had a much cheaper proposition for Mr. Kelly.

"Flat out, I just told him I'd like him to cut Pier Land a cheque for, like, \$25,000 so I can just travel (and) get all the sponsors . . . and just get it going," said Mr. Assoun-Gritten, who does renovations for a living.

He said the mayor wouldn't commit any public funds.

"Their answer is, there's no answer," Mr. Assoun-Gritten said. "They don't say yes or no."

Council would have to approve any such funding request.

Mr. Kelly said Mr. Assoun-Gritten did not have a business plan when they met in the mayor's office, and he told the man to determine if there are "enough land holdings" for his scheme. He also advised him to secure "some partnerships" to back up his pitch.

Mr. Assoun-Gritten has started a petition he intends to present to council once enough people have signed it. So far, he said, about 350 people have signed the petition, which is available online at pierland.ca.

"With everybody I've talked to," Mr. Assoun-Gritten told The Chronicle Herald, "there's nobody that has said they don't want it."

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