

ST. CATHARINES - Had cause to be in Brantford last weekend.

While there, I espied the front page of the local newspaper, The Expositor.

The top story was intriguing. A proposed new logo for Brantford, initially embraced by city council, was being shelved following a flurry of criticism from the community.

Holy flashback!

Keen followers of the St. Catharines civic scene may recall that creative minds at city hall had proposed a new logo for the Garden City last fall, and received a less-than enthusiastic response from their political masters.

Not only was the logo, featuring colourful and stylized flower petals, quickly shelved, but some councillors were also miffed that the design was done in-house rather than farmed out to some professional firm, as had been the council direction.

At the time, I suggested if the city had spent considerable cash for the logo job, chances were pretty good some councillors would have found fault with the results and lamented that the work could have been handled by city staff.

What happened in Brantford gives credence to that view.

As was the case with St. Catharines, Brantford was attempting to rebrand itself by coming up with a new logo and slogan.

The city set aside \$300,000 for the task, drawing money from its Casino Legacy Fund. Of that amount, close to \$80,000 was paid to a Burlington marketing firm to design the logo. The firm spent 18 months seeking input from a variety of groups, conducting surveys and organizing focus groups.

As described in The Expositor, the resulting design features a flowing 'B' representing the Grand River and an exclamation point which is "the universal sign of greatness."

I knew it!

With the logo came a new slogan, "Grand to Great," which The Expositor reported captures the Grand River as well as all the great things that have come from Brantford, including Wayne Gretzky and the inventions of Alexander Graham Bell.

When the proposal was presented to council two weeks ago, local politicians were beside themselves with joy.

"It is very crisp, clean and easy to understand," said one councillor.

"This logo tells people that ... you need to check us out," said Mayor Chris Friel, who called the work behind its creation "exemplary."

Then a very modern phenomenon happened. Social media exploded with negative comments.

Some people complained about the cost, some noted the similarity of the design to one that could be found at a website for free logos.

The mayor did his best to explain the breakdown of costs for the project, and the marketing firm president asserted the similarity to the online logo was a coincidence.

But the damage was done.

Mere days after city councillors did the watusi over the proposed new logo, Friel told The Expositor the design did not have community support, and it would be best to go back to the drawing board.

Yowzers!

OK, let's get back to St. Catharines.

When some councillors expressed frustration last fall about the design work not being outsourced, CAO Colin Briggs countered that the council-budgeted amount of \$20,000 for the project wasn't enough for an outside job.

Council then decided to punt the matter to the 2014 budget deliberations.

Early in the budget-making process, new CAO Dan Carnegie made it known there were no plans to resurrect the logo quest this year.

That position found favour with budget committee members.

Given Brantford's experience, can you blame them?

