

THE FUTURE OF COBOURG'S WEST HARBOUR AND ADJACENT LANDS

A SUBMISSION TO COBOURG TOWN COUNCIL APRIL 7 2015

LORI AND BILL WENSLEY 95 MARISA LANE COBOURG

COBOURG HAS BEEN OUR HOME FOR 30 YEARS. ALMOST ALL OF THAT TIME WE HAVE LIVED ON THE SHORES OF LAKE ONTARIO.

WE LOVE THE LAKE, THE HARBOUR AND COBOURG'S GREEN SPACES AND WE APPRECIATE THE RESEARCH, CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND COUNCIL PLANNING THAT HAS CREATED AND PRESERVED THOSE GREEN SPACES.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PRESENTATION IS THREE FOLD.

FIRST, TO REITERATE OUR OBJECTION TO ANY ADDITION OF BOAT SLIPS WEST OF THE HARBOUR'S CENTRE PIER AND THE RESULTING EFFECTS ON THE HARBOUR AND SURROUNDING LANDS.

SECOND, TO COMMENT ON THE FEBRUARY 2015 SHOREPLAN FINAL DRAFT REPORT ON THE MARINA EXPANSION.

AND FINALLY TO OFFER, WITH RESPECT, SOME OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND QUESTIONS WE FEEL SHOULD BE ASKED AND ANSWERED.

WHY DO WE OBJECT TO THE PROPOSED MARINA EXPANSION ?

QUITE SIMPLY, THE ADDITION OF BOAT SLIPS TO THE WESTERN PORTION OF THE HARBOUR WOULD RESULT IN A CASCADE OF UNDESIREABLE CONSEQUENCES.

THESE INCLUDE:

DEGRADATION OF WATERFOWL AND OTHER WILDLIFE HABITAT.

INTERFERENCE WITH RECREATIONAL USE AND INSTRUCTION ON THE WATER SUCH AS CANOEING, KAYAKING, DRAGON BOATING AND SMALL BOAT SAILING.

IN ADDITION, THE PRESENCE OF DOZENS OF LARGE BOATS ADVERSELY AFFECTS AND FOR SOME PEOPLE, RUINS THE ESTHETIC FEATURES OF AN OPEN UNOBSTRUCTED BODY OF WATER.

THE PROPOSED SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF BOATS IN THE HARBOUR GIVES RISE TO A NUMBER OF UNDESIREABLE CONSEQUENCES.

THESE INCLUDE PROPOSALS TO PAVE THE GREEN SPACE SOUTH OF THIRD STREET AND WEST OF THE MARINA BUILDING IN ORDER TO CREATE ADDITIONAL PARKING AND OFF SEASON BOAT STORAGE.

THE SHOREPLAN DRAFT REPORT

WE REALIZE THAT THERE WILL BE OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMENT FURTHER ON THE SPECIFICS OF THE DRAFT REPORT AND OUR COMMENTS HERE WILL BE BRIEF.

IN A NUTSHELL, WE ARE DISAPPOINTED.

WE HAVE CONCERNS THAT THE BASIC PREMISE OF THE REPORT IS FLAWED.

IT APPEARS THAT THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE STUDY DID NOT INCLUDE ANY DIRECTION TO BRING FORWARD ALTERNATIVES TO THE MARINA EXPANSION THAT HAS BEEN PROPOSED.

THIS REPORT IS, AS ITS TITLE SUGGESTS, AN OPERATIONS AND FACILITIES STUDY BASED ON A PARTICULAR PRECONCEIVED NOTION.

THIS HAS GIVEN RISE TO THE CURRENT GENERAL IMPRESSION THAT MARINA EXPANSION IS A DONE DEAL.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE PROCESS FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND INPUT COULD BE IMPROVED. THIS COULD BE DONE BY EXPANDING THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE ALONG THE LINES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED TO DEVELOP THE 2013 PARKS MASTER PLAN. THAT COMMITTEE UNDERTOOK PUBLIC CONSULTATION USING A VARIETY OF INPUT TECHNIQUES WHICH COULD SERVE US WELL NOW.
2. THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF ANY EXPANSION OF FACILITIES REQUIRES A MORE RIGOROUS STUDY THAN ONE SEES IN THE ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION DOCUMENT PRESENTED RECENTLY TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE. FOR EXAMPLE, ANTICIPATED REVENUE FROM AN INCREASED NUMBER OF BOATING SLIPS SEEMS TO BE BASED ON A WAITING LIST OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ASKED FOR A DEPOSIT TO ENSURE THEIR INTENTIONS. WHERE IS THE COMPREHENSIVE BUSINESS PLAN?

3. WE RECOMMEND THAT THE WEST HARBOUR WATERS BE DESIGNATED AS A MARINE NATURE PARK. A MARINE NATURE PARK IS A SPECIFIC HABITAT PROTECTED AGAINST CONSTANT EXCESSIVE INTRUSION BY HUMAN ACTIVITY SUCH AS CONSTRUCTION, AND HEAVY BOAT TRAFFIC.
4. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE 2013 COBOURG PARKS MASTER PLAN ENVISAGES THE AREA INCLUDING THE WEST BEACH LANDS, THE WEST HEADLAND, THE AREA SOUTH OF THIRD STREET AND OVER TO VICTORIA PARK AND THE BEACH AS A GREEN, OPEN SPACE NETWORK.
5. THE PROPOSAL TO PAVE THE GREEN AREA SOUTH OF THIRD STREET FOR A PARKING LOT AND OFF-SEASON BOAT STORAGE IS COMPLETELY CONTRARY TO THIS VISION.
6. BY NO MEANS ARE WE PROPOSING THAT THE HARBOUR NOT BE USED FOR BOATING. WHAT WE ARE PROPOSING IS THAT THE WEST PORTION REMAIN AS IS AND FURTHERMORE THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO REDUCE EXCESSIVE INTERFERENCE FOR EXAMPLE, BY FAST BOATS SUCH AS SEADOOS. BOATING ACTIVITIES THAT ARE EASY ON THE ENVIRONMENT ARE TO BE SUPPORTED AND ENCOURAGED.
7. AS TO MARINA BOATING FACILITIES AND SERVICES, KEEP THEM EAST OF THE CENTRAL PIER. IF ADDITIONAL SEASONAL SLIPS ARE DEEMED NECESSARY, CONVERT SOME OF THE EXISTING VISITOR SLIPS TO SEASONAL.
8. OUR HARBOUR IS A FINITE SPACE. CONTINUED INTRUSION INTO IT BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF BOAT SLIPS IS NOT IN THE BEST LONG TERM INTERESTS OF THE TOWN, THE PEOPLE LIVING HERE AND OUR VISITORS.
9. FINALLY, HERE ARE A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS THAT NEED TO BE ASKED AND ANSWERED.
 - (1) WHY IS THE PROPOSED EXPANSION NECESSARY?
 - (2) ARE THERE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE CONSIDERED?
 - (3) IS THE CURRENT MECHANISM FOR INPUT FROM THE PUBLIC AND EXPERTS ADEQUATE?

- (4) WHO REPRESENTS THE PUBLIC AT THE APRIL 21 PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE "USERS GROUP" MEETING?
- (5) WHERE DOES THE COBOURG PARKS MASTER PLAN FIT IN?
- (6) WHERE DOES THE COBOURG DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN, CURRENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION, FIT IN? WE NOTE THAT TWO OF ITS STATED "STRATEGIC ACTIONS" INCLUDE "DEVELOPING AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE PARKS MASTER PLAN INCLUDING THE WATERFRONT AS WELL AS IMPLEMENTING THE MARINA MASTER PLAN." ONE IS LEFT WONDERING WHAT THE MARINA MASTER PLAN IS!

IN CONCLUSION, WE WOULD BE REMISS IF WE DID NOT POINT OUT THAT THERE IS A FEELING AMONG MANY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC THAT THE EXPANSION OF THE MARINA FACILITIES IS A "DONE DEAL"

WE DO NOT SHARE THIS VIEW BUT SINCERELY HOPE THAT IT IS NOT THE CASE.