

October 29, 2020

Subject: Letter from Cobourg Brainstormers to the Cobourg Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Thank you for your service on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PARAC). In watching your Oct. 6th meeting, we realized that our suggestions should have been explained in more detail and we will attempt to do that in this letter. Please contact us if you have further questions or require additional clarification.

Crowd and Parking Control in the Waterfront Area

Although our main focus continues to be Victoria Beach, we expanded our mandate to include any potential ripple effect on the waterfront environment - in particular the increased traffic to the West Beach.

This quote from a resident further explains our rationale re: the West Beach:

"It's really sad to see how the added traffic has put pressure on the fragile ecosystems there. There are so many more foot trails through the wildflowers and milkweed, compacted soil around the trees, garbage and other negative effects of the extra beach-goers this summer with the restricted access to Victoria Park Beach. That needs to be considered in any strategy."

Normal inter-town travel/vacation in our area is expected. We have a beautiful waterfront. We *do not* resent visitors. We *do* resent our tax dollars being used:

- to attract larger beach crowds
- to pay higher expenses to control beach crowds in the form of more policing/by-law enforcement
- to clean up after beach crowds

To us, "monetizing the beach" does not mean exploiting it as a profit centre or using that as a method of keeping out marginalized populations. What we intend is for the money to be used as a tool in order to protect the beach from crowds, protect the residents who live in the area and ensure that any extra incurred costs that result from visitors are paid for by the visitors – not subsidized by Cobourg residents. It is only fair.

One suggestion to control beach crowds could be to control the vehicles that bring the crowds. A way to handle this could be for the Town to charge non-residents a daily parking use pass. We would suggest that \$25 per passenger vehicle and \$200 per bus might be reasonable.

Residents would receive parking passes allowing them to park within a defined radius. Wasaga Beach charges visitors \$15 per car and offers a season pass for residents for \$22. Residents fined in error could have the fine forgiven at Victoria Hall by showing proof of residency.

Stop Beach Tourism Targeted Marketing

What private businesses do to attract tourists to enhance their own economic development is their concern, not ours; however, as taxpayers and stakeholders we do have questions regarding the use of beach tourism as a vehicle to foster “economic development”.

- How much Town money is being spent yearly to attract beach tourists and for what purpose? Is it effective?
- Why are residents funding this through our tax dollars instead of leaving businesses to do their own marketing and attraction of dining/shopping visitors?
- Is there an annual beach budget like the stand alone business units for the campground, marina and CCC? If so, where can residents find it to review the Town’s spending on items like beach grooming and lifeguard stations?

Waste Management

Most of the concerns we heard originated from the Ecology Garden regarding two issues: overflowing garbage cans and the existence of human and dog waste on the grounds. This could be an operational issue most easily handled by requesting assistance from Town Staff as issues come up. We suggest that this be followed up by your Committee on a consistent basis.

Lifeguards – cost and liability analysis

We would recommend that this whole issue be re-considered.

We assume that the lifeguards are there for two reasons;

- to prevent drowning deaths during the crowded summer season
- to limit the Town’s liability during the crowded summer season

Lori Laufert is a retired lifeguard. In her professional opinion, the presence of lifeguards does not accomplish *either* objective. She stated that the amount of lifeguards could not possibly monitor the volume of beachgoers. In addition, *the illusion of safety could actually increase the Town’s potential liability*. We have heard similar concerns expressed by acquaintances who are lawyers.

Attached is the Canadian Red Cross Aquatic Safety Plan Guide for Waterfront Operations – 2019. The Risk Management Section (P.13-18), discusses the possibility that the Town of Cobourg’s liability could actually be higher by providing lifeguards because it offers the illusion of more safety.

From the manual:

“Negligence includes failing to provide care, providing care beyond the scope of practice or level of training, providing inappropriate care, and failing to control or stop any behaviours that could result in a person being injured or that could cause further harm or injury”.

From P. 47 Number of Lifeguards

"There is no rule for determining the number of lifeguards required to supervise a waterfront. It may be impossible to provide adequate lifeguards or other safety personnel to ensure the safety of all waterfront users at crowded waterfronts".

The Advisory Committee may remember an incident that happened last year when a beachgoer was rescued by one of Green Canoe's staff - as opposed to one of the lifeguards.

Perks for Residents (i.e. "Membership" should have its privileges)

One of our concerns is that residents feel a disconnect from our municipal government. Although the situation has improved with the new council, some staff and council still appear to perpetuate the old culture that did not treat residents as special but rather as a source of "revenue generation" without taking into consideration their needs and wishes. The missing piece to this is the responsiveness of council and staff to the concerns of residents. The following excerpt from The Power of Moments by Chip and Dan Heath is a very good description of what we're trying to get across... "Non-responsiveness is corrosive when residents are not seen or treated as special or simply taken for granted."

Survey

We no longer recommend that the Town conduct another survey given that many residents have expressed a lack of confidence in the results of previous surveys.

Miscellaneous

Could the committee ask about a resident's concerns? He asked about empty school buses that allegedly run from Northumberland Mall to bring visitors to the beach during the summer months.

In closing, thank you for your consideration of our thoughts and ideas. We would be happy to clarify or to answer any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely

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