

September 11, 2017

Deputation for West Harbour Concerned Residents Group

Our group seeks to communicate our residents' viewpoints effectively with the Town of the Blue Mountains regarding further development and the preservation of the natural character of the harbour neighbourhood. Current issues include:

- Development of the Abbott lands (2.5 acres, between Victoria and Lansdowne; Lakeshore and Huron) (including Victoria and Bay Street Road allowances)
- Harbour Master Plan
- Potential Upgrade of Lakeshore Drive (Road width, sidewalks, loss of trees)

Currently; the Town is considering Stopping up and Closing Unopened Road Allowance portions of Victoria Street North and Bay Street West (1.73 acres)

This action was commenced as a direct result of proposals put forth by Loft Planning Inc. at the request of Tammy Abbotts for purchase of the land.

Aims of Deputation

1. Potential impact of changes to the existing surface storm drainage in the area
2. Importance and Impact to wildlife, including the brown bats
3. Narrow bands of focus vs a wholistic view
4. Point out recent legislative changes relative to the OMB and its anticipated effects on local planning and municipal boards

Potential Impact of changes to the existing surface storm drainage in the area

- In the February 22, 2017, Planning staff report PDS.17.13 said they have canvassed the departments and they are generally supportive. IPW identified some municipal drainage on a portion of the Bay Street allowance that would need to be addressed. This could be accomplished either through the development proposal generally or if the Town sold only half of the Bay Street road allowance.
- We accessed the file and Drainage said:

- A key factor in the property sale and the site arrangement be maintaining the current drainage system on the unopened sections of Victoria and Bay Streets that crosses Lansdowne Street North. A culvert drains into this drainage system at Huron Street and from the adjacent condo. We'll need a replacement drainage system including an appropriate easement if the road allowance is sold. We'll need a Drainage Plan in hand (accepted by the Town) and likely securities as well to do the work before the sale can be considered. Any easement width needs to include the width of the ditch and at least you 4 m alongside for access. The easement terms should also include the concept that utilities may be installed within the easement just to keep that flexibility.
- The drainage ditch runs north from Huron Street to Bay Street and then west all the way to Lansdowne Street.

Most recent "Unofficial Loft Proposal, April 27, 2017" suggests a 3 m buffer and 5 m drainage ditch be maintained; Add 4 m for access and have used up 12 of the 20 m road allowance

- Trees are more than 3 m apart so suggestion of a 3 m buffer is simply a cruel joke
- Tree roots are intermingled and you will ultimately damage the roots of the few trees that are left
- Between the impact of the loss of support of neighbouring trees, root damage and the inevitable change to the water table you will wipe out the entire stand of cedars as well as the hedges running between properties on Lakeshore
- The character & habitat will be totally wiped out
- 24 M (79') deep min width lots; zoning calls for 9m &10 m setbacks front and back, so have 5m (16') to build home unless further variances are granted

This does not appear to:

- Enhance the greenspace & beautification by the water in Thornbury as recently cited as an aim of the Town by Shawn Everett, Director of Community Services
- Adhere to the Strategic and Official plans of The Town of the Blue Mountains

Importance and Impact to wildlife including the brown bats

- Maintain the Cedar woods as a green space wildlife corridor
- Habitat that it provides for bats, birds, squirrels, rabbits, toads, insects, raccoons and frogs and numerous other diverse species
- The brown bat is a protected, endangered species; we certainly have bats but have not yet verified that they are the endangered species.
- The bats consume a vast quantity of mosquitos
- Rural character, strategic aims, endangered species

Narrow bands of focus vs a wholistic view

- A hundred years ago, knowledge was limited and one could know a lot about almost everything
- In the information age, our knowledge has expanded to where an individual can only know thoroughly an ever-narrowing band of knowledge.
- This is evident in many organizations including the Town
- As bands of focus narrow, gaps are introduced and new departments created to fill them
- But this doesn't solve the bigger problem of pulling it all together into a wholistic viewpoint considering all stakeholders.
- Awareness and taking the time required are necessary strategies

Point out recent legislative changes relative to the OMB and its anticipated affects on local planning and municipal boards

OMB is currently being replaced by a tribunal with far different powers and obligations than the board being replaced

As we understand it:

- They can only rule on plans submitted and no longer come up with their own
- They must now respect town plans as validly directing development
- They must listen to submissions from all of the affected parties

This means that the planning departments will finally have the ability and responsibility to direct development in accordance with the town plan and not just exert a minor influence since the OMB will simply over-rule it anyway.

Closing

Immediately following our last deputation, a bulldozer was dispatched to the site and commenced grading and knocking down more trees. He was stopped by the actions of our members as he was crossing onto the Victoria Street road allowance. (which he had no idea the location of). The Town by-law officer arrived and was told that he was done anyway. The No Trespassing signs soon followed.

The cedar woods cannot be immediately resurrected following their destruction and given the Town initiative currently underway to enhance the greenspace in this part of town, it would seem logical that no action be taken on these road allowances until after the Harbour Master Plan has been completed.