

Presentation to Council – August 27, 2012

Your Worship, Councilors, I would like to thank you for providing me with the opportunity to speak this evening about the future recreation needs of Collingwood. I am here tonight as a full-time resident of Collingwood and the spokesman for a group called the Friends of Collingwood Central Park. This group was formed as a reaction to an overwhelming number of residents who are outraged by the lack of process and transparency on the part of Council in this matter.

The mission of the Friends of Collingwood Central Park is to see the wishes of the community served in building one community recreation centre to serve residents for decades to come.

Our motto from the beginning has been to; Do it once and do it right!

Our goals are to;

1. Ensure that future growth and needs are considered in the development of a recreation facility.
2. Keep residents fully informed of the development of recreation facilities in Collingwood.
3. Assist in providing a public voice to ensure that community needs are being met.
4. Contribute to the vibrancy of Collingwood through public engagement on recreation facility development.
5. Support efforts to attract residents and business to Collingwood.
6. Work together with other like-minded groups and agencies.

The change of direction away from the Central Park plan has left the community confused as to what you are recommending. At the July 16th meeting, we heard for the first time of an alternative plan to the Central Park project. Plans that were described as “temporary” have now become permanent. Now, only 6 weeks later, and with no input from the community, the stakeholder groups, the Park Recreation and Culture Advisory Committee, you are prepared to approve the spending of nearly 15M dollars. How is this even possible?

Senior staff was instructed to review the options identified at the July 16th meeting. Senior staff themselves has commented on how hard they have had to work to complete their staff report on the options identified by the deadline you set. That alone should speak to the speed at which this decision is being made. Are we OK with such important and costly decisions being made under such time pressures?

The report prepared by Senior Staff is incomplete and falls very short of public expectation.

Operating costs have not been identified for either the pool or the ice pad.

The Central Park Redevelopment Project report includes projected operating costs of a pool connected to the YMCA. Where is the comparative cost analysis now that we will be in competition with the Y and not in collaboration?

These can only be viewed as intentional omissions.

Rob Armstrong, Chief Executive Officer of the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka has written to you to confirm that the Y is still interested in a partnership that would see a pool constructed at Central Park. While the Y cannot commit to capital funding, they are prepared to absorb much of the operational costs. This alone could save the taxpayers upwards of \$400K annually. This partnership would give residents a newly constructed pool and a warm water therapy pool at Central Park. The therapy pool has been identified as a community need, but is completely absent from the Staff report.

Deputy Mayor Lloyd said at the July 16th Council meeting that he didn't want Collingwood to be like other communities that have combined recreational operating budgets in excess of \$500K annually. Operating three facilities at three different locations would easily exceed, if not double this amount.

There are no alternative vendor solutions for covering the pool and ice rink.

The staff report for the pool indicates that the specifications used to develop the report were an "insulated enclosure over the existing facility to be used on a year round basis." It goes on to say that the company Staff researched it is only supplier of this type of structure. That may be the case if you limit your research to membrane structures. One only needs access to a smart phone to find pool enclosures at the Granite Club, Royal Glenora in Edmonton or a pool that I built when I was the Assistant General Manager at the Toronto Cricket Club to see that other solutions exist that use non-traditional bricks and mortar construction. Why were none of these companies contacted or considered in the review? We deserve better than to be told that no other options exist when this clearly is not the case.

The enclosure for the rink would have many alternative solutions. The staff report has identified only two, but has dismissed the alternative with little disclosure as to why.

To me this is a lack of due diligence and an attempt to manipulate the community into thinking that no other options exist. This is simply not the case.

After reviewing the report there are other questions that emerge.

When you review what is included in the pool costs the only item that looks to remain is the pool tank itself. Was any thought given to adding the cost of a new tank to the budget and moving the entire project to the preferred Central Park location where we could be in partnership with the Y rather than in competition and the operating costs could be significantly reduced?

There is no mention of additional pool equipment that would be required to upgrade the existing mechanical systems from a 3 month pool to a year round facility. I am speaking mainly of advanced water treatment and computer monitored systems that are common place in year round pools. As a regular user of the pool, I have been inconvenienced at least 3 times this summer by the pool being closed for chemical related matters. This does not happen in modern facilities.

Has a pool consultant been retained to determine the impact of a 45 year old pool operating in the winter?

Has anyone actually visited a location that has the enclosure being considered? Or, are we just buying something out of a catalogue?

Where is the cost to rebuild the ball diamond that will be lost to make way for the new rink?

The Staff report lacks full disclosure of the total costs of the project. At what point where you going to disclose the true costs of the plan and not just the costs that support your position?

The lack of process, transparency and public involvement in reviewing the alternative projects is troubling. Spending even a dollar on these projects without disclosure of full costing would be considered by me to be a reckless use of taxpayer dollars.

Council is accountable for due diligence. Why are you not demanding?

1. Full comparisons of the options – both capital and operating
2. Apples to apples comparison of the facility components – what elements are in or out of each scenario?
3. Review of the fiscal impacts to the taxpayer over the long term of operating multiple facilities in multiple locations
4. Investigation of funding scenarios for all options – have you abandoned trying to identify public and private funding and support through Government capital grants?
5. Demand an open and competitive tendering process to determine the best vendor and not just the one that meets your narrow specifications.
6. Consideration for the preferences of the community residents

Our message is clear;

1. Do not make a decision on this matter tonight.
2. Stay the course on the Central Park concept. There is still an opportunity to realize a community multi use facility at one location.
3. You have called for the creation of a Phase Two Steering Committee. Strike this committee and allow them the opportunity to work with Staff to develop a report that takes into consideration the needs of the community and our ability to fund them.
4. Establish an open and transparent process of soliciting feedback and communicating back to the community.
5. Ensure that an open and competitive tendering process is used to determine any vendor

I am reminded of what Councillor Chadwick said at the July 16th Council meeting on the subject of the purchase of a new town vehicle. He said “sometimes you have to pay a bit more to get a better product”. Should the same logic not apply here?

Are we really going to consider putting millions of our taxpayer dollars into facilities that by all accounts are long past their useful lives?

Let’s Work Together.

We all have the best interests of the community at hand and are not far away from viable and workable solutions for the long term.

Let’s Do It Once and Do It Right!