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MacLeod Park Concept Plan 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this “concept plan, 2024” on behalf of the Cannington & Area Historical Society.

Background:

The Historical Society has had a presence in MacLeod Park since June 1977 when the Village of Cannington Council approved a by-law to **dedicated** specific space in the park for the “Cannington Historical Museum” and its proposed “village of rescued” heritage buildings from this area.

In 1978, the Society in partnership with the Horticultural Society and Lake Simcoe Conservation Authority built a marked / identified gravel “nature path” along the southside of the Beaver River.

This is the fourth “MacLeod Park plan” that we have participated in: 1976, 1998 and 2014. The 2014 plan designer would not meet with representatives from the Society to learn about existing infrastructure and previously “approved by Council” plans. Among the uninformed assumptions in the 2014 proposal was the misnaming of the south-side of the park, the incorrect name of the Museum and no understanding of existing underground utilities, etc.

We also acknowledge such “plans” are only valid until the next municipal council amends it.

The Historical Society’s issues and concerns are mostly related to operational matters, regardless of any park plan. These can only be resolved by the implementation, and enforcement, of a park design principles.

Stability in any concept is mandatory rather than continual modifications of land-use and lack of consultation.

Of the two concepts proposed, Concept Plan 2 would be our choice.

Parking:

Having a proper parking lot for events is essential.

Right now, parking is all over the grounds. Frequently, there is a conflict with events happening at the same time. This has resulted in a serious potential issue for personal injury and consequential liability to the Historical Society and Township.

We have children and adults forced to navigate between parked vehicles to travel between the Museum building. So far, we have just been lucky there has not been a serious personal injury.

Not just defining, but enforcing appropriate off grounds parking is essential to both concepts

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Circulation:

Both concepts have a “walking path” between the buildings at the Cannington Historical Museum. The Museum has experienced multiple break-ins and vandalism. It has been recommended by security consultants and the police that the “path” between the buildings be closed. Certainly, not opened further. That proposal should be deleted. Efforts by the Historical Society to close and tree this path have not been successful with planted vegetation removed.

We do NOT support the idea of paths between the Museum buildings as proposed in both concepts.

The Stockade:

This feature in the park is not mentioned.

The fence post stockade and locked gates around the main grounds of MacLeod Park south, were a result of repeated acts of theft and vandalism at the Museum and ball diamonds. This included the stealing of all the metal from the caboose, including the railway track under the van. Smashing windows and dropping fireworks down the chimneys of all the buildings. Vehicular access was recorded on the Museum’s security cameras as the main contributing factor. A partnership between the Historical Society and the Township resulted in the stockade security measures. The Township took the lead, to benefit from its HST rebate advantage, with the Historical Society contributing 10’s of thousands of dollars.

With the gates not being locked this summer, incidents of vandalism, such as setting off fireworks on the old log cabins, the needles and trash from ‘bush parties’ behind the structures, has increased 10-fold. The not-for-profit Historical Society cannot keep spending all its operating budget and reserve funds making the same repairs again and again.

The stockade must be maintained and a locking system re-installed.



Signage:

Enhancement signage to and into the park is welcomed.

For example, there was a charity car rally this summer. Those not familiar with Cannington could not find the waypoint of the Museum.

We have since addressed the Google mapping issue and the Township has amended its Peace Street signage to note there is indeed a museum in MacLeod Park.

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Community Gathering Area:

For decades, the flats in front of the railway station have been an existing site for meetings, class lessons and plays.

However, and this is another example of the conflicts in land use, for reasons of convenience to others, and apparently beyond the requests of the Society and Township to relocate, and because it is accessible to the port-a-potties contractor, toilets have in recent years been placed – in the middle of the existing “Community Gathering Area”.

This has been a major source of distraction and mockery to the school class and Museum visitors.

Placement of temporary washrooms is another operational issue for an existing proposal in both concepts. The contractor should be working for the convenience of all park users!

Washrooms

The proposal for real washrooms, with a drinking / refill station, available until at least later in the fall and earlier in the spring is welcomed.

However, a secondary source of disconcertment is again the location of the port-a-potties. Not only for the summer season but for some special event these toilets have been placed up against the Museum’s cedar rail fence AND on top of the newly planted trees.

Temporary event-locating of port-a-potties is another operational issue that will **not** be resolved by having permanent washrooms.

Environmental Concerns:

It is proposed in both concepts to use “asphalt” on courts and access routes. This is obsolete technology. In landscaping and park management, there are environmentally sensitive alternatives that must be explored for parking, pathways and courts.

This is a park for all including respect for our environment.

Tree Planting:

Since the Park was previously a grain field the native trees had long been removed. In addition to being essential to the environment, trees provide much needed shade for visitors during the summer.

This is a feature of both Concept Plans and is essential.

However, experience has demonstrated this to be a difficult operational issue to maintain. As per a deposition to Council, the Historical Society purchased thousands of dollars worth of trees which were planted by our volunteers. Unfortunately, this investment, and these trees have been substantially destroyed due to the actions of others. Other events requiring more space, vehicles parked on top of or against, but mostly, because of aggressive park maintenance.





Park Pathway Lighting:

When the Historical Society brought electrical service to the park from Cameron Street, an underground power line was installed along the cedar fence row. This was to provide pedestrian-scale lighting. This electrical service has now been severed.

Pathway lighting would add not only an ambiance experience but contribute to the overall security to people and property. However, that might be mute since the **park by-law prohibits entrance to the park at night.**

Future of Cannington Historical Museum:

Neither concept specifically references the Museum. Does this mean decisions have been made that there will be no more acquisitions of locally rescued structures or displays?

There were plans and installed utilities, to acquire a one-room schoolhouse and a church to be placed between the station and driving shed. These plans were put on hold due to the depletion of the Historical Society's reserve funds to pay for remediation efforts at the Museum's vandalized buildings. Secondly, park plans were further deferred with the need to obtain a headquarters, the Blacksmith & Carriage Shop, after the Historical Society was evicted from the Cannington Town Hall, to remain a creditable corporation.

Nevertheless, the concepts do not provide any reference or space for future structure. Does that mean the "pioneer village" plan is terminated?

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Cannington & Area Historical Society that owns and operates the Cannington Historical Museum.

November 11, 2024