

**To the Town of Kingsville Mayor and Council**

**Re: Ed Cornies -- Comments on the Proposed Mettawas Park Pavilion**

I attended the Council meeting on August 17 where the alternative designs for the proposed pavilion/banquet hall at the new Mettawas Park were presented and share the concerns raised by others about the apparent lack of a justification for the facility. I also have several concerns and comments about the overall design of the park which are set out below.

I am happy to see that the Town has decided to not go ahead with the rehabilitation of the King's Landing building. The proposed rehabilitation would have been a costly mistake resulting in a facility with serious design and operating constraints which would have limited its potential attraction and usefulness.

What exactly is the justification for the new pavilion? Why is it being proposed? Has there been a careful examination of the costs and benefits involved? If it were built, would it not result in unfair and unnecessary competition with existing private sector facilities such as the Golf Club and several of the local wineries that currently offer banquet facilities as well as inhibit the development of additional facilities in the future?

The presentation of the three design alternatives did not include a consideration of parking requirements. There are approximately 100 parking spaces situated adjacent to the Lakeside Pavilion. During many major weekend events at the Pavilion most of these spaces are occupied. A similar number of parking spaces would be necessary if a second (6000 square foot) pavilion/banquet facility is established at Mettawas Park. In addition, it is not unusual for 20 to 30 vehicles to be parked on the Mettawas Park property along Park Street during the early evening hours by customers of the Beach Restaurant. This would result in a potential peak parking demand of up to 130 vehicles and mean that practically all of the area at the top of the hill would have to be reserved for the construction of the pavilion/banqueting facility and a massive paved parking area. Very little, if any, of the park would be visible from the street.

As an aside, I assume the Town is thus far providing the Beach Restaurant with free parking for its customers. Is this not resulting in unfair competition with downtown restaurants?

I have several comments that are shared by other residents that I have spoken with about the design of the small picnic pavilion that was recently constructed in the northwest corner of the park. These are as follows:

- It is located too close to the adjacent townhouses.
- The roofline is too high. This will result in inadequate protection from poor weather conditions. The building is also too small and essentially only offers enough space for one small group activity.
- The pathway to the structure from the parking lot is too circuitous and the area around the structure is over planted.

- There is no pathway exiting the structure and proceeding south into the park.

These are basic design issues that should have been resolved during the conceptual planning stage. Was a professional landscape architect involved in the process leading up to the construction of this structure?

I urge the Town to engage an experienced parks planner/landscape architect to review and help refine the overall Mettawas Park plan. Getting the splash pad, playground area and beachfront at the bottom of the Park right will require expert design assistance. In addition, the Town should consider providing some parking at the bottom of the hill to make the park more accessible for the handicapped, seniors and families with small children. In this regard, I recommend that the Town have a close look at the parking facilities and top quality amenities that have been installed at Seacliffe Park in Leamington.

The Town's two most important defining qualities for both residents and visitors are its downtown and its waterfront. The downtown seems to be doing well and has the potential do even better with the development of a detailed secondary plan. Hopefully this will be included in the upcoming official plan review.

The parkland opportunities afforded by the waterfront should not be overlooked and the mistakes of the past should be avoided at all cost. Lakeside Park is undoubtedly the Town's greatest public open space asset. It would be perfectly complimented by the establishment of a professionally designed Mettawas Park and the implementation of a long term standing policy to purchase all the waterfront properties between the Park and the Dock access road for open space purposes.

The two properties immediately adjacent to the Dock access road have been for sale for well over a year. The Town should act immediately to purchase these properties and use the money allocated for the Mettawas Park pavilion/banqueting facility for this purpose. The remaining properties, most of which are occupied by substandard dwellings, should be purchased over the longer term as they become available for sale.

The long term policy goal should be the establishment of a strip of parkland on the south side of a reconstructed Park Street with limited parking and landscaping, a pathway and some benches overlooking the working harbour. This action would also serve to stimulate and complement future redevelopment projects on the north side of the street.

Respectfully Submitted

Ed Cornies

