

March 16, 2023

TOWN of THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

32 Mill Street,
Thornbury, ON N0H 2P0

Attn: Mayor A. Mastrosovs & Members of Council

Re: Proposed Wakeboard Park Development - Former Cedar Run Horse Park Lands

Dear Members of Council,

As a follow-up to the prior letter I sent dated March 10th I wanted to provide you with some additional information that I have found which I feel is important as you deliberate on the Official Plan and Zoning Amendment applications for the Bayou Wake Park.

First, I did attend the Committee of the Whole Meeting on Tuesday March 14th and heard the deputation made by the applicant Brennan Grange. As was the case in prior public meetings that I attended, Mr. Grange made numerous claims about the park and its alleged benefits to the community none of which were substantiated by any facts.

In his opening remarks the applicant stated:

“Our project aims to provide a unique and enjoyable recreational experience for individuals and families in the Town of Blue Mountains, while also offering economic benefits, promoting physical activity, and contributing to the community's overall well-being.”

In doing my own research of which there is ample information online, I found the following which were the results of a survey conducted in the U.S. and posted on the website www.wakeboard.com.

United States

What age groups wakeboard?

- 55-64: 1%
- 45-54: 1%
- 35-44: 8%
- 25-34: 28%
- 18-24: 32%
- Under 18: 30%

Are they male or female?

- Male: 87%
- Female: 13%

Essentially 90% of participants are under the age of 34 with the majority being males.

Upon doing some further research it was not surprising to see that in Canada the numbers are not much different. The following statistics are posted on the demographics tab of the Waterski and Wakeboard Canada website <https://wswc.ca/>

Canada

What age groups wakeboard or waterski?

- under 18 45%
- 30 – 39 10%
- 18 – 29 35%
- 40+ 10%

Are they male or female?

- Male 78%
- Female 22%

These results show that in Canada 90% of participants are under 39 years of age and similar to the U.S., the majority (78%) are males.

These numbers clearly reflect that the demographics of waterski and wakeboard participants in both countries are similar. For the most part it is a sport dominated by males that are in their thirty's or younger with 30% to 45% in each country being under the age of 18.

Given these facts and unlike the applicant's deputation, the proposed park is not and perhaps despite the applicant's best intentions, an experience that will be enjoyed to any significant extent by families. Rather it is predominantly an activity for a younger male audience.

Upon doing further research I found a report done in the U.S. (see attached) that shows the number of people in the U.S. that wakeboard has been declining from 2006 to 2020. It reached a high point of 3.65 million people in 2010 and has been trending downward since that time to 2.73 million participants in 2020 a decrease of 25%. These numbers would indicate that this is not a growth sport.

In addition, the U.S. has a distinct advantage over Canada in that the southern U.S. provides a much warmer climate where watersports of this type can be done year-round therefore adding to both the appeal and over levels of participation.

In his deputation the applicant further stated:

We take pride in the environmental sustainability of our facility and believe it is the most suitable use of the property.

On what basis can a claim be made about "the environmentally sustainability of our facility," regarding a facility that has yet to be built. The applicant is not a Planner. As such he does not have the planning expertise nor does he provide any data to substantiate his claim that the cable park "environmentally sustainable" or "is the most suitable use for the property. If in fact a cable

park is “the most suitable use of this property” then Amendments to both the Official Plan and the Municipality’s Zoning would not be needed. Thankfully those safeguards are in place.

In addition to not meeting current requirements as set out in the Municipality’s Official Plan and Zoning nor those of Grey County or the Province, a seasonal 5 to 6 month of the year weather dependent business of which 90% of users are under the age of 35 does not constitute a “highest and best use” purpose anywhere.

In my prior letter of March 10th I touched on the financial aspects of the proposed park in terms of its affordability for users, increased employment and the financial benefits that the applicant claims the park will bring to the community therefore they do not need to be stated again herein.

That being said, in his deputation to the Committee on March 14th the applicant closed by stating the following all with no facts:

“In summary, the Bayou Cable Park offers numerous benefits to the community, including enhanced recreational opportunities, economic growth, environmental sustainability, and compatibility with surrounding land uses.”

It was very apparent and confirmed by the applause, that a large number of attendees at the Committee meeting on March 14th were supporters of the cable park. One only needed to scan the audience to see that those in support of the project fell within the demographics of the waterski/wakeboard sport that I have provided herein, primarily younger males. There is nothing wrong with that but it clearly reflects who the typical user of the park will be. It will not be families and that brings into question the following:

- What will they bring to the Blue Mountains in terms of economic spending and growth.
- With wakeboard participants declining in the U.S. is this business sustainable?
- Is this the direction that the Municipality wants to take in building on the community’s tourism and recreational amenities based economy that has played a key role in the area’s residential and commercial growth thus far?

One of the challenges facing municipalities such as the Blue Mountains is growth. One of the many tasks at hand for not only this Council but others is not to stop growth, but to manage it in such a way as to protect if not enhance the very reason why people want to come here to live, work and play in the first place.

Given the information I have provide herein along with my letter of March 10th, the claims being made by the applicant are unfounded and lacking in any facts to support them. The applicant has either (a) not done his homework with which to draft a viable business model or (b) with vague unsubstantiated information he is knowingly misleading Council in having them make an important planning decision that is of benefit to himself rather than the community as a whole.

In his written deputation of March 14th Mr. Grange states that among other things, he a “Wake Committee Member of Waterski Wakeboard Canada” the very organization where I obtained some of the statistics I have provided. It appears he is either ignoring or is unfamiliar with the statistics pertaining to the sport from an organization that he is actively a part of.

In closing I am speaking not as someone with the attitude of “not in my backyard.” In addition to my real estate business wherein I act in the best interests of my clients some of whom are against this proposal, I am active in giving back to the community including holding positions as Past Director and President of Lakelands Association of REALTORS®, Past Director and Treasurer of the Collingwood Chamber of Commerce and Past Chair of the Nottawasaga Lighthouse Preservation Society. I say this not to impress you but to impress upon you that I care about the community and put forth the effort to research, support and address issues that are in fact in the best interests of the community today as well as tomorrow. I am confident that as elected officials you share the same objective(s) and that the information I have provided herein will serve to help you reach an informed decision as to what is in the best interest of the Municipality moving forward.

Respectfully submitted,

[Redacted Signature]

Rick Crouch

[Redacted Address Line 1]
[Redacted Address Line 2]
[Redacted Address Line 3]

Number of participants in wakeboarding in the United States from 2006 to 2020 (in millions)



Source

Outdoor Foundation
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Additional Information:

United States; Outdoor Foundation; 2006 to 2020; 18,000 respondents; 6 years and older; Online survey