

Wendy and Thomas Maloney

[REDACTED]

Deputation to City Council

Re: CSOPS.24.018 Peel St South Servicing

May 13, 2024

Two weeks ago, Committee of the Whole voted responsibly to table the Peel Street Servicing staff report because critical background information was absent. That situation hasn't changed. Questions remain unanswered and worse, not asked.

Approving 125 Peel Servicing would essentially green-light the Campus of Care. To vote in favour of that massive project would be premature. A vote in favour could saddle the Town to deal with unintended consequences for years to come.

Here is an example of the many unanswered questions: What will the Campus of Care cost the taxpayers of the Town of the Blue Mountains?

We don't know. We don't even have estimates. Because this is a Rush Job. From early 2022, the Campus had ballooned during secretive negotiations with no public input whatsoever. As proposed, it is a nine-building megalopolis housing up to 1,500 people. The proposal suits downtown Mississauga just fine, but it would fit quaint Thornbury like a suburban shopping mall on Bruce St.

Staff is asking you to move ahead immediately. And yet, almost one year later, here is the status of these crucial background reports, so far as we know:

Drainage Plan: Incomplete.

Arborist's final report: Still not available. (Incidentally, the tree now leafing in front of our yard would be surprised to learn that it's labeled as "dead" in the preliminary report).

The Transportation Operations and Impact Study? Incomplete.

The Transportation Master Plan? Ignored.

We note that the Town sent, by email, the updated "Active Transportation Review" on Wednesday, May 8, at 4:13 p.m. Deputations had been prepared earlier that day, in time for the 9 a.m. Thursday deadline.

And that, Madame Mayor and Councillors, is the easy stuff.

What of the permanent implications? Aside from the colossal physical alteration of West Thornbury ... aside from the precedents Council would establish for the entire Town of the Blue Mountains by exceeding bylaw limitations with multiple five-storey buildings ... let us consider the long-term sociological, cultural and financial ramifications of the decision in front of you today.

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-- Where is the research about the impacts of squeezing some 1,000-to-1,500 people, or a 30-to-40 percent increase to Thornbury's present population, onto 18.7 acres relatively overnight?

-- Canada is suffering a family-doctor shortage crisis with no resolution in sight. How will the Town attract doctors, nurses and other medical/dental professionals including mental-health practitioners?

-- Do local hospitals have the capacity to treat more patients?

-- Where will social service workers come from?

-- Are the schools able to absorb more students?

-- How many more police officers will the OPP need to hire? How about paramedics? And firefighters? And teachers?

-- Even if all these service personnel can be attracted, where will the money come from to pay for them? Will Skyline, the developer, commit to financing all these services? Now that's a question we do know the answer to: No.

You don't have any of this information because Staff didn't research it. Because Staff wasn't directed to research it during former mayor Soever's term. Why? Because the Campus of Care is a Rush Job.

From Craigeath to Thornbury, there's a desperate shortage of recreational facilities – no pool, no public gym, few basketball and tennis courts, four pickleball courts, room for maybe two full-size soccer fields at the Tomahawk complex, one indoor rink, no outdoor rinks. How does the Town intend to rectify that situation for the growing numbers of families and seniors?

Bob Winters sold his farmland to the Town at a bargain price in 2021. The Town divided 18.7 of the 33 acres for Skyline and retained a slice along Hwy 26. What's the plan for it? Another question, another answer we don't have.

Last week, in a Facebook post, former mayor Soever resorted to hyperbole in a desperate effort to save a glory project that defies common sense in so many ways. He proclaimed that Council, by stalling the project until you are given the proper load of research and data, would be "driving vulnerable seniors out of town". He has suppressed facts and figures from the public, both during his term and right up through the FB post.

For one, there's already a development at Victoria and Napier streets in Thornbury that is restricted to people aged 55 and up. Thornbury Meadows will be comprised of 85 units when completed, most of them being single storey. Unlike the five-storey buildings proposed for the Campus, residents can walk out of their homes onto a patio and lawn area, and into their driveways.

Two, as with so much else associated with the Campus of Care, we have zero details about the pair of five-storey seniors buildings designated for seniors. Will the units be condos sold at market rate? If so, what will be the price of the units? How about the monthly maintenance fees? Will they be

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rentals? If so, at what cost for a two-bedroom unit? Going rental rates in the area are approximately \$2,500 monthly. Would the former Mayor deem that number to be affordable for seniors on pensions?

Traffic

Let us consider the Transportation Master Plan (TMP). The TMP was finalized for Council on Dec 1, 2022, and it included references to the Campus of Care. Staff dedicated the equivalent of a year-and-a-half on it. The Town spent 375 thousand dollars for consultant and staff time. (Thank you Mr Everitt for being forthcoming with this information, upon request). The consultant alone billed the Town slightly over 200 thousand dollars.

Nowhere in that TMP is Peel Street designated as the access point to the Campus of Care. Peel St is mentioned only three times, as an Active Transportation Corridor. Active Transportation means bikes and pedestrians and wheelchairs.

The developer, Skyline, has ignored the TMP. The developer wants Council to authorize a plan that will devastate the entire existing neighborhood lying to the east of the Campus by routing extraordinary traffic through it.

In particular, it would bring more than 300 cars ... and pickup trucks ... and service vans ... and dump trucks ... and front-end loaders ... and semi-trailers ... and fifth wheels ... and police cruisers ... and paramedic ambulances ... up and down Peel St. *Every single day*. This makes no sense. The Campus blueprint provides for about 800 parking spaces, and there would be innumerable visitors, trades and service people entering and leaving the Campus on a daily basis.

Peel St. S., along with Baring St. and Alice St. and all other streets – including Alfred, Napier and Duncan -- in the neighborhood lying directly east of the Campus, should be protected from an invasion of traffic at all costs. Families with children live on all those streets.

Water and wastewater infrastructure can be installed on Peel St. North and South without declaring traffic war on the neighborhood. Traffic management and water infrastructure are separate issues. They need not, and for the safety of all, should not be intertwined.

The TMP identifies the intersection of Line 10 and Hwy 26 as the destination for a stop light in near future. Moreover, two weeks ago, Council approved the Lora Greens development, with 38 units. That development will attract probably 60-to-70 vehicles and 150 men, women and children, not including their guests and service vehicles.

Line 10 is the logical, primary access point into the Campus, fed by an intersection that would be made safe at Line 10 and Hwy 26. It's a completely sensible solution. Another entry could be made through the Town land bordering Hwy 26.

Yet at Committee of the Whole, Mr. Witherspoon, of WT Infrastructure Solutions, reported to you that Staff did not give his consulting company instructions to consider the intersection of Line 10 and 26. Why?

Affordability

Another issue: Mr. Witherspoon reported two weeks ago that it would be unaffordable for residents to tie into the water and wastewater services. He estimated costs ranging up to about 135 thousand dollars.

These services are being built to service the Campus of Care. Accordingly, the Town and developer are morally obligated to underwrite the cost for residents of Peel, Baring and Alice streets up to 80 metres from Peel – the latter as presented in an option in the Staff report.

Responsible Communications

This Town's No. 1 strategic priority is to cultivate trust among stakeholders by pursuing community engagement proactively. Why has Staff refuted that mandate during the Campus of Care buildup?

The Campus of Care would arguably be the Town's largest government-supported project in history. Yet prior to the Committee of the Whole two weeks ago, the Town had conducted a total of two Public Information Meetings. They were spaced apart two years. Two years, and taken together they engaged fewer than 75 people, including Staff and elected officials.

In the first, in early 2022, a BVO Seniors group was told by teleconference that one or two buildings may be erected on the Campus.

The second meeting occurred about two years later, on March 7, 2024. That's when Mr. Witherspoon shocked the Campus neighborhood, especially with the Peel St. traffic plan. Your constituents were permitted 14 days to respond. 14 days to respond to a project plotted by the Town for two years.

Since that date, the Campus neighbors have presented Councillors with a deluge of facts -- an interesting dilemma considering the lack of information made available publicly by Staff since May of last year. In fact, there's so much research in front of you now, it's become a much more complicated decision. I don't envy the Councillors, having to wade through all of it to do the right thing. It's something of a shell game.

Grey County took nearly 10 years to research Rockwood. During that time, Grey actually talked with the ratepayers, listened to the constituents, got feedback from all parties before making a decision to proceed with the rebuild.

By comparison, you're being asked to approve this development in less than one year's time. It's a Rush Job.

To circumvent the Town's three-storey bylaw, and to change the dimensions and character of the entire village of Thornbury forever, Staff used a MZO. That's become an obsolete device. Subsequently the MZO was converted to a CIHA. That device too, will soon become obsolete.

Why? Because the residents and taxpayers of this entire province rebelled. We don't want what these devices permit a few self-interested parties to do.

Two years and two months ago, at a March 2, 2022 Council meeting, Councillor Paula Hope suggested that two members of the community be brought into the task force. Why? To give taxpayers a voice. Then-Mayor Soever rejected the idea. He said: "*Community engagement has killed a lot of good projects in this community.*"

Over these past two weeks, we've seen former mayor Soever claiming that the Town had to give something back to the developer in order to get a long-term care home built. According to Mr. Soever, we needed to provide the developer with density, i.e., a microcosm of the cluster surrounding Square One in Mississauga.

People stay here to avoid density; people move to the Town of The Blue Mountains to escape density.

It's one thing to build out the Blue Mountain resort area. Whistler has done that. But Whistler doesn't permit mid-rise buildings on the outskirts, as the developer is proposing with Mr. Soever's enthusiastic support.

Density wasn't needed in Meaford to build a long-term care home. Density isn't required to build Rockwood Terrace approved by Grey County. Density wasn't required for Simcoe County to build Sunset Manor, the long-term care home in Collingwood.

Please let Premier Doug Ford's recent pledge ring in your ears: "*We are not going to go into communities and build four-storey or six-storey buildings beside residents. It's off the table for us.*"

The Campus of Care is mis-named – as proposed, it's a for-profit real estate development, with one of nine buildings designated for long-term care.

This is a Rush Job, promoted by the former mayor. The consequences of voting prematurely in favour of green lighting the Campus today would be felt for years to come. There are too many questions left unanswered.