

Tom Maloney

Deputation to Committee of the Whole
June 11, 2023

During my two prior depositions, I had erroneously quoted estimated traffic flow along Peel Street at 300 vehicles per DAY.

Staff, in the report before you today, has corrected me. In fact, the actual estimate is 300 vehicles per HOUR at peak times.

That's 600 over two hours in the morning, another 600 over two hours in the evening. Onto a road that is 600 metres long.

How does that work safely? It doesn't.

So Staff and WT Infrastructure has revised the plan.

Council members, did you know this?

In the Staff report presented to you previously, the gravel strip between Baring and Peel was to be closed off. Doing that would have prevented traffic from flowing down Alice Street to and from the Campus. A little solace in that, for residents.

But my spidey sense kicked in.

On Wednesday, I asked Mr. Witherspoon of WT Infrastructure about the status of the plan.

That evening, after the first draft of this deputation had been written in time for Thursday's 9 a.m. deadline, he informed me by email that the new plan is to make an intersection at Baring and Peel.

This would flow traffic onto Alice rather than away from the street.

Why has the plan changed? We as taxpayers and voters have never been consulted about the Campus until decisions are already made behind closed doors.

We are left to speculate.

There's no commitment from the Ministry of Transportation to construct a roundabout at Peel.

At certain times of the day, it would be near impossible to turn onto 26, or off 26 into Peel.

The solution now is to flow traffic down neighborhood streets – Alice, Alfred, Duncan.

Alice is used by folks who walk with their kids and dogs to Moreau Park. It's a popular cycling street too.

Alice doesn't have sidewalks (unless Staff is also changing the plan to go full urbanization).

So in this new iteration, the cyclists and pedestrians would be forced to share the road with cars, SUVs, transport trucks, front-end loaders.

Make sense to you? Make sense to the Town's lawyer?

In considering the purposeful lack of communication about the Campus of Care since its very inception, one word keeps coming to mind:

Sneaky.

Example: Deputations for the Council meeting on May 13 were due by Thursday, May 9 at 9 a.m. On Wednesday, May 8, at 4:13 p.m., the Town sent, by email, the updated "Active Transportation Review".

Last Wednesday, as I was writing the deputation for this meeting of Council again with a 9 a.m. Thursday deadline, Mike Humphries kindly informed me that the Preliminary Traffic Impact Study would be posted soon, hopefully by end of day. I never saw it.

This report should have been completed and posted weeks if not months ago, certainly in time for interested parties to draft their deputations.

Another word that comes to mind is, disrespectful. The Staff report before you today is nothing but dismissive of stakeholder concerns. How did this become an Us vs. Them thing?

Byron Pulsifer, a Canadian author and former corporate executive, says: "One of your most prized possessions is integrity; if this is you, then you should never compromise it."

With that quote in mind, let's examine how Council is being asked to approve a nine-building megalopolis on a former apple orchard. The Premier of this province recently said that we're not going to be putting such developments next to existing neighborhoods. Yet Staff wants this Council to go ahead with it anyway.

Back in June of 2021, the Town published a press release expressing support for an Errinrung long-term-care facility fronting 26, on the vacant field between Foodland and Peel. The release came with a lovely drawing, which also showed how seniors bungalows would be built at the back of the complex, adjacent to Alice Street. Perfect. A couple days later, the Town issued another release, telling us, the deal had fallen through. The then-mayor was quoted saying something to the effect of, these things happen. It seemed like we were living through an episode of Corner Gas.

Subsequently, a task force was formed to consider the Campus of Care. That task force consisted, at first, of one councillor, the present Mayor Matrosovs who has no apparent career background in major real estate developments. Would Council consider drawing expertise from a community loaded with business, real estate and legal experience? No, the former mayor said, because community engagement has killed a lot of good projects in the Town of the Blue Mountains.

Queen's Park offered 160 beds. Long-term-care is within the jurisdiction of the county and province, not municipalities. This Town jumped at the opportunity anyway -- without an endorsement from Grey County, which would be building a LTC in Meaford, 15 minutes' drive from 125 Peel.

With the prior Council's approval, an RFP went out. It insisted that developers meet rigorous community environmental and architectural standards. No developer accepted the conditions.

Still, the dialogue continued with SkyDev. Behind closed doors.

Originally, this project was to consist of a long-term-care facility, a building for LTC staff, and seniors residences. And before that, 125 Peel was to be a badly needed recreational facility.

Come March 7, 2022, the Town published a press release inviting public feedback to the proposed Campus of Care. The release listed 12 different aspects of the project. Anyone

noticing the release learned for the first time that two buildings -- not nine -- would be constructed to a maximum height of six storeys.

The release gave the public all of 2-1/2 days to respond, by March 10 at noon.

<https://www.thebluemountains.ca/town-hall/news-notice/public-feedback-requested-regarding-community-campus-care>

The Town would go on to conduct a survey for feedback about upgrading the Official Plan. It's contained in the Jan 16, 2024 Official Plan Review Update to COW (4.014 Official Plan Review Update: Summary of Public Engagement)

Regarding Thornbury, it says:

"How can we achieve appropriate growth opportunities and maintain Thornbury's **lowrise character**? The importance of housing diversity and integrated transportation will be critical. Consideration of vegetation buffers, setbacks, permeability, and the possibility of growing up in certain areas (i.e., along the Highway vs. in Thornbury) was suggested."

In short, citizens want to maintain the character of Thornbury, protect the environment and get some reasonable public transportation in place.

Between March of 2022 and March of 2023, these original standards were compromised during meetings that the public was not aware of. The wishes expressed in the survey were dismissed, as these conditions no longer became mandatory for a Campus developer:

- Onsite active transportation facilities
- High-quality urban design in accordance with the Town's Community Design Guidelines
- A cohesive architectural theme that compliments (sic) the built form within the Thornbury community
- Environmental sustainability including green building components.

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What does all that translate to?

Come May of 2023, 14 months later, Mr. Everitt appeared before Council to present a drawing of the Campus of Care. With nine buildings, six of which would exceed the three-storey limit.

There'd been zero public consultation. Afterwards, there was another vacuum of silence until March 7, 2024 when a so-call public information centre was conducted via Microsoft Teams.

Let's get the terminology straight.

In fact, this was a *private* information centre. The guest list was restricted to those who had signed up for project updates on the website. This Town has never proactively engaged the community about the Campus through town halls, dedicated newsletters, etc.

The Town puts up a sign for everything around here.

A survey? There's a sign for that.

A new build on a lot? There's a sign for that.

A proposed development? There's a sign for that.

Yet here we have a nine-building development, a project probably costing upwards of one billion dollars, and there's no sign for that. Anywhere. Not even on Bob's former orchard.

Why?

On March 7, we were gobsmacked to learn, for the first time, that Peel Street was to be used as the primary access road, that 100-year-old trees were to be taken down, that an entire neighborhood would be devastated.

What the taxpayers of this Town didn't learn, and still haven't been told, is how much this is going to cost them.

On May 13 of this year, after more than five hours of discussion, Council voted to bring engineering up to 60%. But unlike on March 7, 2022, the Communications Dept did not distribute a press release. It published what communications manager Tim Hendry deemed a "project update", not a press release, and therefore there was no requirement to distribute the information to media or the Town's general email list.

It's just sneaky.

It's unbecoming of this Town.

We return to the point that remains unaddressed by Staff in this Report. Which is, why use Peel Street as the primary access portal to the Campus, rather than County Road 113 and even Hwy 26? Traffic and Water are separate infrastructure issues. The Town can move water and sewer pipes along Peel St S without taking down trees and turning a quiet residential collector road into an expressway for traffic.

Staff writes that using Peel as a Campus portal is "convenient". Convenient for who? SkyDev? It's certainly not convenient for the residents of Thornbury West, including those in the High Bluff and Cameron streets area. It is convenient, though, for Town Staff seeking to use development charges to pay for this infrastructure.

The Town paid \$375,000 in staff and consultant time to develop a Master Transportation Plan. Submitted to Council on Dec. 1, 2022, it identifies the intersection of 26 and County Road 113 as needing a traffic signal in near future.

And yet, when The Town commissioned WT Infrastructure to prepare the Campus of Care Servicing and Peel St. South and Alice Street Reconstruction report, the terms of reference did not include a look at that intersection.

Why?

By using that intersection to feed Campus traffic onto Grey Rd. 113, then using 113 as the only vehicle portals into the Campus, you would avoid disrupting the Thornbury West neighborhood with an obscene, and dangerous volume of traffic.

A huge advantage to this concept would be to isolate Peel and Alice as active transportation corridors by turning vehicle traffic away with a cul de sac at the intersection of Baring and Peel. Instead, now we want to turn it into a thoroughfare onto Alice.

Moreover, a signal at 113/26 would make the intersection safer for residents of Cameron and High Bluff and the coming Lora Greens development and for Goldsmiths shoppers.

So why not plan around County Road 113?

Like so many aspects of this project, we don't know why.

I've personally raised numerous issues, in particular about the apparent lack of preparation for adding 1,000 to 1,500 people onto a 23-acre parcel of land – policing, schooling, mental health care, hospital emergency capacity, the chronic lack of family doctors across this entire country. Staff has had three years to research these aspects.

Here's how Staff responds, in the report before you today:

Quote: "The Maloney's have many concerns related to the Campus of Care and communications which Council is aware of."

That's it -- before moving on to a couple of paragraphs about traffic flow.

In other words, there are no answers.

Council still doesn't have all the reports required to make a decision. Staff is asking you to put the cart before the horse. That's a mistake too many municipalities have made in the past. There's no reason to make that same calamitous error here.