

Jillaine Thomson

RE: CSOPS.24.043

Deputation Request, June 24th, Council Meeting

Dear Madame Mayor and Councillors:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to address you once again on the critical matter of the 125 Peel Street South servicing project. I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude for the thoughtful discussions and deliberations that have taken place regarding this project. It is encouraging to see that our collective voices are being heard, and I appreciate the steps you have taken to address some of the concerns raised by our community.

I would like to acknowledge and commend several positive aspects of the motion passed by the Committee of the Whole:

Public Meeting for Campus of Care Concept Plan: Scheduling a Public Meeting to receive comments on the Campus of Care Concept Plan Proposal is a vital step towards ensuring transparency and community involvement. This will provide residents with a much-needed platform to share their insights and concerns.

Engagement with MTO and Grey County: Prioritizing engagement with the Ministry of Transportation and Grey County to address public safety concerns at key intersections demonstrates a proactive approach to ensuring the safety and well-being of our community. This is a crucial aspect of the project that cannot be overlooked.

Infrastructure Improvements: The decision to replace the deficient water mains on Alice Street and Baring Street, with appropriate restoration and drainage improvements, is a welcome development. These actions will help address long-standing infrastructure issues and improve the quality of life for residents.

Environmental Impact Mitigation: Directing staff to maximize neighborhood environmental impact mitigation, including tree assessment and protection, flexible alignment sections, and minimizing road cross-section for speed control, shows a commitment to preserving the character and environment of our neighborhood.

Affordability Guidelines: The motion to provide a follow-up report outlining affordability guideline options for residents on Peel Street South is a crucial step. Ensuring that the financial burden of connecting to water and wastewater does not fall disproportionately on residents is essential for maintaining fairness and equity in this project.

I appreciate these positive steps and the Council's willingness to engage with the community. However, there remain several pressing questions and concerns that need to be addressed to ensure that this project is conducted in the best interests of all residents.

With this in mind, I would like to delve into some key questions where further clarification and commitment are essential:

1. Environmental Assessment Approval:

- Why has there been no approval process under the provincial Environmental Assessment Act for the project, as required by the Town's Official Plan?

2. Environmental Site Assessments:

- What are the results of the Environmental Site Assessments Phases 1 and 2 conducted by Cambium, and how will these results protect residents' drinking water?

3. Tree Protection and Forestry Act Compliance:

- How will the project ensure the protection of tree drip lines to prevent root damage, and what measures will be taken to mitigate the risk of tree death due to dewatering during construction?

4. Property Expropriation:

- Are there plans for property expropriation, and if so, how will residents be compensated?

5. Road Usage and Upgrades:

- How will the Council ensure that Peel Street South remains a local road until future studies warrant upgrades without burdening residents with predictions based on preliminary plans?

6. Transition Rules Post-CIHA Repeal:

- With Bill 185 having received royal assent and CIHAs now repealed, what are the transition rules to permit CIHA orders that have been made to date to continue functioning as municipal zoning by-laws?

7. Community Engagement:

- Why has there been no proactive engagement with the community, such as through town halls or dedicated newsletters, especially for a project of this magnitude?

In addition to the aforementioned questions, there are new concerns that have come to light which require the Council's immediate attention. According to a March 6, 2023 staff report (FAF.23.036), at a Closed Session Council meeting on a January 23, 2023, Council directed staff to amend the original key elements of the Campus of Care so the following elements no longer carried the status of "Preferred" or "Mandatory": the naturalized stream

corridor and environmental sustainability including green building components. Addressing these concerns is crucial for the comprehensive and responsible development of this project.

Initially, the naturalized stream corridor was a key element in the Campus of Care, emphasizing its environmental importance. The Little Beaver River and its tributaries, including the stream corridor on 125 Peel Street South, play a vital role in supporting the region's biodiversity. Thanks to the efforts of the Beaver River Watershed Initiative, the installation of a fish culvert has re-enabled fish movement for the first time since 1872, fostering a diverse aquatic ecosystem. This initiative aligns with the Town of The Blue Mountains' commitment to environmental stewardship and the renaturalization of our natural habitats, as reflected in multiple municipal statements.

However, the proposed development presents significant environmental concerns to this stream corridor. Identified as having ten areas of potential environmental concern by an environmental site assessment, 125 Peel Street South, historically an apple orchard, is likely contaminated with arsenic and pesticides. Given the historical context and the established environmental significance of the Little Beaver River, it is imperative that we take proactive measures to protect and restore the naturalized stream corridor. Leaving this responsibility solely to the developer risks prioritizing profit over ecological integrity. Therefore, we urge the Town to enforce stringent environmental protections and engage in active management practices to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of this vital natural resource.

The removal, moreover, of environmental sustainability including green building components from the key elements for the Campus of Care is a significant departure from the Town of The Blue Mountains' long-term vision as outlined in *The Blue Mountains Future Story*. This integrated community sustainability plan emphasizes the importance of sustainability and green building practices as foundational to the community's future. The plan highlights that The Blue Mountains is committed to being carbon neutral, reducing its carbon footprint, and ensuring that all development prioritizes environmental sustainability and climate resilience.

The Blue Mountains Future Story explicitly calls for the development of green development standards and the construction of net-zero carbon buildings. These initiatives are designed to guide new developments in a way that minimizes environmental impact and supports the community's sustainability goals. By excluding these critical elements from the Campus of Care, the project risks not aligning with the community's declared climate emergency and undermining efforts to create a resilient, low-carbon future. This exclusion

not only contradicts the town's strategic priorities, but also disregards the collective vision of its residents for a sustainable, vibrant, and livable community.

It is imperative that the Town of The Blue Mountains reassesses this decision and reintegrates environmental sustainability and green building components into the project proposal. Doing so would not only uphold the community's values and strategic goals, but also ensure that the Campus of Care serves as a model of sustainable development, reflecting the town's commitment to environmental stewardship and long-term resilience.

Request for Council:

We deserve a process that is transparent, inclusive, and grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the potential impacts of such a massive development. We are not opposed to change or development but insist that it be done with the utmost care for those who will live with its consequences.

Therefore, I urge the Council to pause the servicing of 125 Peel Street South. Let us not rush towards irreversible decisions but rather take the necessary time to gather all pertinent information, engage deeply with the community, and ensure that our collective future is built on a foundation of careful thought, thorough analysis, and genuine consensus.