

Deputation to Town Council

Re: Purchase of the Unopened Bay Street West Road Allowance

Date: Monday, January 26, 2026

Presenter: Christina Eaton, Adjacent Landowner, Speaking on Behalf of Lakeshore Drive Neighbours

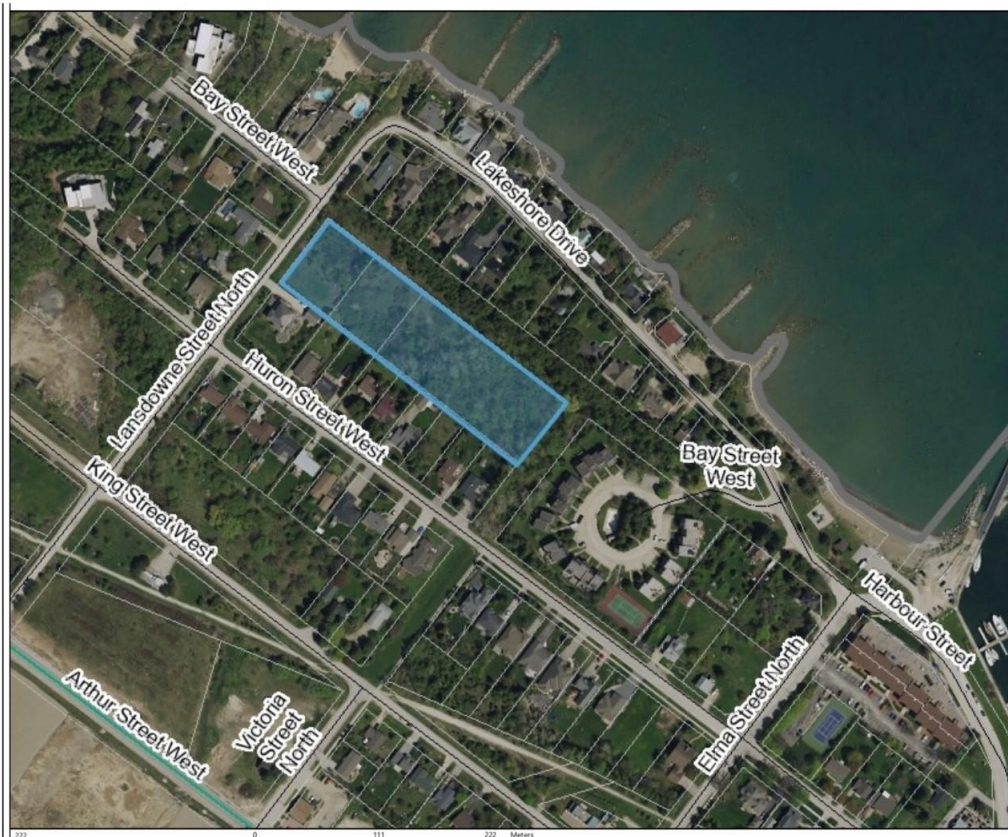
1. Introduction and Purpose

Good morning Mayor and Members of Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today [I will take the full 10 min].

I am here representing my neighbours to request Council's support for a clear and defined pathway that would allow the adjacent landowners on Lakeshore Drive to purchase the unopened Bay Street West road allowance abutting our properties—in a way that benefits not only the homeowners, but the Town as a whole.

This deputation builds directly on Council's unanimous direction of September 8, 2025, when staff were instructed to pursue a pathway to make such a purchase possible, and responds to Staff Report PBS.25.081.



2. Context and Changed Circumstances

Many of you will recall the Ontario Land Tribunal decision from May 2022, to which we were a party. Several current members of Council were also serving at that time.

What has changed since then is significant:

- Nearly four years later, nothing has been built on the vacant lot known as “the Abbotts land”.
- Immediately after receiving OLT approval, the property was listed for sale, indicating the owner had no intention of proceeding with construction.
- The approved development has been actively marketed for more than three years without success.
- The Town and OLT approvals are now functioning primarily as a speculative asset, rather than as a development proposal intended for implementation.

These are not minor delays. They represent a material shift in market conditions and public interest since 2022.

3. Our Objective

Our objective is straightforward:

To identify a practical, policy-based solution that allows the Town to sell the unopened road allowance to adjacent landowners, resulting in a clear benefit to all stakeholders [including the owners of the Abbotts land].

We note that the Committee of the Whole agenda last week included several examples of unopened road allowances being sold to adjacent landowners. These transactions are not hypothetical—they are occurring now.

We recognize that the distinguishing factor in our case is the 2022 OLT decision. However, it is our position that:

- The OLT does not have jurisdiction over Town-owned road allowances, a point confirmed by Town Staff;
- The disposition of Town-owned lands can and should be considered independently of the OLT ruling;
- Given current market conditions, it is highly unlikely that any purchaser of the Abbotts land would implement the OLT-approved development plan as it is currently designed

meaning that the road allowance in question may not even be required for what is going to be built there; and,

- Not only is there is demonstrated interest from Lakeshore Drive landowners in acquiring the unopened Bay St West road allowance for preservation purposes, but we also have the strong support of our surrounding neighbours as they recognize this is good for the neighbourhood as a whole.
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4. Clarifying the Public Narrative

I would also like to briefly address a recent media article in Collingwood Today titled *“Bigger backyards not on deck for Thornbury residents.”*

This matter is not about expanding private backyards. Residents have consistently indicated they would also support the Town declaring the unopened Bay St West road allowance as permanent parkland or green space.

The key issue is that the Town originally made the road allowance available to the Abbots subdivision proposal on the condition that affordable housing be incorporated into the design. That housing has not materialized, nor is there any indication it will.

Early real estate sales & marketing materials for the Abbots land explicitly referenced the road allowance and included it in acreage calculations, implying they owned the road allowance. After concerns were raised, the road allowance was removed from real estate listings.

In fact, for reasons of optics, the Abbots have removed their land altogether from formal real estate listings, though it continues to be publicly advertised through other means such as signage and Facebook.

5. Planning Reality: This Land Cannot Be Developed in the Foreseeable Future *

A critical planning reality must be acknowledged:

The Abbots land cannot be developed until the King Street land to the south is developed.

The King St parcel of land has also been on the market for years, constrained by servicing limitations and broader market conditions, with no indication of near-term development.

As a result:

- The Bay St West road allowance is effectively landlocked; and,
- There is no realistic development scenario on the horizon.

Allowing the road allowance to be tied up indefinitely, solely to preserve speculative development potential, does not represent good planning and does not serve the public interest.

6. Litigation Risk: Inaction Is Not Neutral

We understand the Town's concern regarding litigation risk. However, we respectfully submit that continued inaction may prolong uncertainty rather than reduce risk.

Key considerations include:

- The OLT ruling does not bind the Town with respect to the disposition of its own road allowances;
 - At the current asking price of approximately \$4.5 million, the implied per-lot cost of \$225,000 far exceeds what could be considered attainable housing;
 - After many years of effort, the approvals remain dormant and unimplemented; and,
 - Is it possible that the Town should consider a policy whereby these approvals are not extended indefinitely, but run out if they're not implemented within a reasonable timeframe?
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7. Public Interest Has Shifted Since 2022

In 2022, Council was motivated by the promise of high-density, low-cost housing.

Today:

- Nothing has been built;
- The Town has incurred substantial legal costs; and,
- The approvals are increasing speculative land value rather than delivering housing.

Meanwhile, nine taxpaying homeowners on Lakeshore Drive remain in perpetual limbo—unable to responsibly invest in major home improvements because of the uncertainty surrounding a potential future road in our backyards. This uncertainty suppresses reinvestment and local economic activity.

8. Direct Financial and Strategic Benefit to the Town *

Allowing the purchase of the unopened road allowance would generate immediate and tangible benefits for the Town:

- Sale proceeds could be directed to the Community Improvement Plan (CIP), which supports attainable and affordable housing initiatives;
- Environmental benefits—including the preservation of mature trees and improved drainage—have already been documented and presented to Council; and,
- The Town would convert a dormant asset into immediate public value, rather than allowing it to sit unused for years.

This approach supports housing objectives and environmental policy, while increasing the Town’s tax base.

9. Council Direction and the Path Forward

On September 8, 2025, Council voted 6–0 to direct staff to pursue a pathway forward.

In response, and after several delays, Report PBS.25.081 was made available in December. The contents of this report did a good job of reviewing well-known historical information instead of focusing on finding a solution forward for all stakeholders, as was Council’s direction. However, we appreciate the inclusion of:

Option 2: Initiate Town Policy POL.COR.07.02 for the Sale and Disposition of Town-Owned Lands.

This option directly reflects Council’s direction. We are not asking Council to predetermine an outcome—only to allow the process to formally begin.

10. What We Are Asking For Today *

We respectfully request that we move forward with Option 2 as detailed on page 6 of the Staff Report:

1. Council Resolution

- A Council Resolution is required to initiate the process which can begin immediately;
- Town Staff can then request a formal application from the Lakeshore Drive homeowners and provide Notice of Application, Notice of Public Meeting; and,
- I trust you are aware of this process given that other road allowances have been sold recently to adjacent town homeowners

2. Process and Timelines

- As the person who has been deputized to lead this on behalf of my neighbours, I would appreciate clear proactive communication on how this process works.
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11. Closing

In closing, we believe this matter can be resolved through transparent public discussion—without litigation.

Allowing the sale of this unopened road allowance:

- Reflects current market and planning realities;
- Reduces speculative land value;
- Generates immediate public benefit through the CIP;
- Provides long-overdue certainty for Lakeshore Drive residents; and,
- **It could even result in the Abbotts land becoming more attractive, should it be reasonably priced, for neighbouring residents to purchase. But the neighbouring residents won't consider this until the matter of the road allowance is cleared up. This is the WIN for the owners of the Abbotts land, and would result in a compromise for all stakeholders.**

The benefits to the Town include:

- **Environmental:** preservation of mature trees and improved air quality;
- **Environmental:** drainage stability and reduced flood-risk exposure;
- **Planning:** elimination of the risk of dual-fronting the Lakeshore Drive lots, an undesirable planning outcome;
- **Strategic:** significant funding potential to support affordable housing; and
- **Strategic:** a clear demonstration that the Town values timely, implementable development outcomes.

This is not about blocking good development. It is about responsible planning, fiscal prudence, and ensuring Town-owned land serves the public interest.

We look forward to working collaboratively with Council and staff and respectfully ask for your guidance on formally initiating this process.

Thank you for your time and consideration.