

Brent Larmer,

Clerk, Town of Cobourg.

Northumberland Common Elements Condominium Corporation #50 Response to Public Works Staff Report for April 1, 2019 Committee of the Whole Meeting re Unfinished Business re Lower Division Street/ Esplanade Traffic Study.

Dear Mr. Larmer:

Further to our letter of August 16, 2017, we are not satisfied with the adequacy of the current Public Works response and strongly recommend that further consideration should be given to our concerns. We do not agree with the Staff recommendation that this issue should be removed from the unfinished business agenda.

Our reasons for this position are as follows:

Division Street

Our numerous concerns about Division Street peak season traffic and parking, particularly those affecting our 165 Division Street lane exit, were detailed in our August 16, 2017 letter.

We are pleased at the proposed removal of the motorcycle space, which is now long overdue. The enlarged size of this space has been an invitation to oversized trucks and other vehicles which, while parking illegally, often frequently extend right up to our 165 entrance for lengthy periods. The proposed movement of the first space 2m north should make a big difference to the north sightline when exiting our 165 Division laneway.

With regard to the pictures in the Staff Report Figures 2 and 3, we are concerned that they give a distorted impression, compared with the traffic and parking realities in our location during the peak season we are concerned about. We do not know exactly when these pictures were taken but it appears it was during our recent winter since the former Marca's appears closed and its patio removed. We have just learned that Marca's former premises have been taken over by a new owner who plans to re-open this spring with aspirations for an enlarged patio. It is also evident from both pictures that parking is very sparse, whereas it would be highly occupied in summer.

Figure 2 is taken from a ground level angle which greatly magnifies the width of Division St. and our entry lane. Obviously the parking and traffic situation in peak summer is very different.

We appreciate the background explanation in Section 5 but we are concerned about the safety of both vehicles and pedestrians.

In addition to the large number of laneways/ intersections described in our August 2017 letter, we would emphasize that all of the ground floors between Albert Street and The Esplanade are, or planned to be, occupied by commercial businesses, including 2 very active restaurants in summer – the fast food/ice cream bar and Marca's, which are both adjacent to our lane. These businesses, particularly the restaurants, receive frequent large truck deliveries for which no on-street parking is available. The result is that these

trucks simply unload in front of us, which frequently reduces other vehicle traffic to a single lane, making it dangerous for both other vehicles and passing pedestrians.

This is NOT a normal residential or commercial area in summer. Removal of the 2 parking spaces in front of Marca would improve this situation if those spaces were reduced to stopping or drop-off status, or one handicapped space, at least in summer. There is substantial car parking available in the waterfront lot just steps away.

The Esplanade

The SPEED section in 6.0 states that speed measurement was conducted on both Division St. and the Esplanade. The latter is apparently incorrect in that the following paragraph explains this was NOT done on the Esplanade because a pole was not available. We are confused by the unmeasured conclusion that vehicles on the Esplanade would probably be travelling at the same or lower speed than on Division St. In our experience, many offending vehicles travel faster on the Esplanade, despite its much lower 20k limit, simply because the traffic is usually lighter. There is also no stop required between Division and 3rd Streets, unless slower vehicles are encountered, and no traffic light at either end, as on Albert St.

It must be emphasized that the Esplanade is a PARK road. While normally much quieter at night, it is abused in summer by drivers who use it as a drag strip, starting in the Division St. lot and circling the block loudly at very high speeds.

Esplanade traffic has increased substantially in recent years. While many vehicles drive slowly, and often stop on this narrow and winding park road to view our outstanding harbour, many others regularly use it as an alternative artery, to avoid busier Albert and King Streets. This is especially obvious on summer weekends when King St. is closed and Albert St. is overloaded. Under normal peak summer conditions, we would be surprised if an accurate speed measurement did not find a higher proportion of speeders on the Esplanade than on lower Division St.

The Esplanade is supposed to be off limit to trucks but that does not seem to be enforced. As an example, the garbage trucks picking up on lower Division St, routinely exit by turning right on the Esplanade, over to 3rd St. Given the heavy traffic going to the trailer park in mid-summer, we observe many large trailer/vehicles having learned that they can enter the trailer park much more easily by making a straight entry across the Esplanade from the west, rather than fighting the usually much heavier traffic down through central Cobourg on Division St. and making the tight left turn into the trailer park.

As explained previously, we are concerned about the lack of at least one safe crossing, especially given the large volume of pedestrians arriving at the middle of the Esplanade through Rotary Park, often families with young children laden with beach and picnic supplies. It is understandable that their first inclination is to cross the Esplanade to the boardwalk and water. They are far less likely to be interested in going to the end of the north sidewalk on the Esplanade.

We welcome Public Works' adoption of our suggestion during the Waterfront Study of a one way only trial is to reduce peak summer vehicle traffic. Another approach, which might be less disruptive, would be to install Stop Signs in both directions at, for example, the intersection of the Second St. walkway at the Esplanade. That would have

the advantage of slowing down vehicle traffic and providing a much safer pedestrian crossing closer to the middle of the Esplanade. Removable speed bumps in the same location would be another alternative.

We are strongly opposed to paving more of the precious open green space on our Waterfront as proposed in the recent Waterfront Study. In fact, we understand that the earlier Waterfront Study proposed that the Waterfront was to be preserved for people as an environmentally friendly space. We participated in the recent planning workshops and believed our consultants agreed with that, and that the waterfront parking lots were a “mistake”. Adding paving and drawing additional vehicle traffic into the waterfront seems contrary to the recommendations of the Great Lakes Waterfront Study and our “Blue Beach” Designation. Shouldn’t we be maximizing the permeability of our waterfront?

In contrast, Public Works rationalizes our summer traffic congestion “as drivers trying to get the best parking spot as close to the beach as possible”.

Since the Esplanade parking lots have been installed, we are very unlikely to remove them. However, we think it very unwise to add to them.

On that basis, we agree with Public Works’ proposal to improve traffic circulation in the present lots, which we had also suggested.

Future Traffic Circle

We explained our position on the proposed traffic circle in our 2017 letter, when that was included in an early draft of the Waterfront Study. It was also included in the final visual plans, without any descriptive details, estimated cost or engineering justification.

To accommodate the vehicles entering the trailer park, which include 40’ house trailers pulled by large trucks, would require a very large circle, which would dominate the entry to our main pier and the beach.

We note with concern that the Waterfront Study’s visual plan also proposes to pave over further green space – west to 1st St., presumably to maintain the present parking lot size. Apart from substantial cost, the proposed traffic circle would obviously cause disruption of its own - in vehicle driver education (especially of visitors), signage and other requirements.

It is apparent that the proposed circle should be dependent on resolution of the east pier situation. It is also dependent on approval of the proposed Travel Lift, since the circle would probably be precluded by the size of the cranes, and trucks towing boats on trailers requiring pier access during the present semi-annual boat lifting.

Conclusion

During summer, central Waterfront traffic is continuing to grow rapidly and parking nearby is very limited. In fact, both pedestrian and vehicular traffic is continuing to grow year round and hundreds of walkers, dog walkers, runners and bikers now use the Esplanade on a daily basis, weather permitting.

During summer, the grassy strip in the park along the Esplanade is heavily used for picnics, games and general recreation.

With continued growth of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, there will inevitably be increased competition for the present limited parking.

While the Waterfront Study was approved in principle by the last Council, many of its major projects will require specific Council approval in future.

If Marina expansion is approved, the Waterfront Study proposes that much of the present green space between the Marina and Hibernia St. would be paved for additional parking.

Along the central Waterfront and on the Esplanade, there is essentially competition between maintaining the green space in the PARK and adding vehicle PARKING.

If lost, the present Esplanade and nearby green space cannot be replaced. It is essential that as much of it as possible should be maintained.

An alternative solution to the anticipated increased demand in summer seasonal parking, which does not negatively impact our Waterfront, must be explored.

For the Board,

Jon Tondeur

Don Morrison

Susan Eddy