



STRONGER. TOGETHER.

*Lives changed by cancer
are strengthened by communities.*

Survivor Thrivers Breast Cancer Survivors Society

www.survivorthrivers.com

The April 30, 2020 document, Cobourg Harbour Aquatic Safety Audit Report-Back has been written with a positive tone calling for collaborative discussions to find solutions so that all parties can come to agreement.

The Survivor Thrivers are encouraged to read that *“The intention was always for the Town to take the recommendations and then work with user groups to identify reasonable solutions while still addressing the municipal legal and moral responsibilities.”* (page 11 & 12)

and

“It is not the intention of the Community Services Division to limit the use or enjoyment of the Harbour...” (page 13)

and

“The Town fully supports and promotes stakeholder engagement and active two-way communication.” and, “The (Community Services) Division would like to work with Harbour users ... to develop a schedule that meets the needs and safety of all groups and individuals as fairly as possible.” (page 17)

We welcome the opportunity to share our written comments and an oral presentation with Mayor Henderson and Members of Cobourg’s Town Council.

Over the years, The Survivor Thrivers have always provided feedback and comments related to Town initiatives. Most recently, on November 5, 2019, we attended the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting to address and highlight our concerns related to Recommendations contained in the Cobourg Harbour Aquatic Safety Audit Report-Back. Our concerns focussed on Recommendations 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 14. Many of the points that were identified by the Survivor Thrivers and other user groups have been included in the Report-Back.

Reading the statement that Town Staff will come together *“to work collaboratively with user groups to create reasonable, fair and transparent Harbour use policies and procedures for all users.”* (page 2) reassures us that our voices were heard and our ideas will be considered.

Safety is important. No one wants to be involved in or the cause of an accident on the water. We are prepared to do the work. We want to participate in discussing and planning the next steps. We recognize that the Covid-19 Pandemic has created a new and different world. We are willing to meet virtually to resolve the issues and

create reasonable, fair and transparent Harbour use policies and procedures. A detailed action plan and timeline for this process must be developed as soon as possible.

Detailed information about our concerns related to Recommendations 7 (*limiting paddling in high risk areas*) can be found in Appendix A. Appendix B outlines our concerns about Recommendation 8 (*requiring use of a safety boat*).

The Survivor Thrivers Dragon Boat Team position with respect to specific recommendations:

- Survivor Thrivers Support Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
- Survivor Thrivers does not support Recommendation 4 (*developing a Harbour Emergency Response Procedures Manual*) until a full study of the Harbour Safety by Cobourg's Risk Manager is completed. This data is needed to fill in the gaps from the Lifesaving Society's Audit Report. This process must begin as soon as possible and include extensive consultation with User Groups and observation of programs in action. This information will be important in the preparation of an Emergency Procedures Manual and will help guide discussions related to Recommendations 6, 7, and 8.
- Survivor Thrivers does not support Recommendation 6 (*revise the User Group Agreement form*) until Town Staff and User Groups have clarified mutual responsibilities and defined best practices and minimum standards.
- Survivor Thrivers does not support Recommendation 7 (*separating motor craft and self-powered craft*) at this time. Give time for meaningful and considerable discussion to take place between Town Staff and User Groups so we can exercise common sense, good judgement and come up with a plan that works for everyone and ensures everyone's safety. There would appear to be appropriate regulations already in place. Boat operation is subject to a series of rules similar to those governing road traffic and include, the Criminal Code of Canada.
- Survivor Thrivers does not support Recommendation 8 (*ensuring all user groups are using a safety boat for all organized activities*) until further discussion and investigation by Town Staff and all of the User Groups have been completed. Collaboration is required to develop appropriate policies, procedures, and staffing model. The discussion and investigation would uncover requirements that would guide the selection of a safety boat and costs (Capital & Operating)

In Conclusion, The Survivor Thrivers supports a majority of the recommendations in the Report-Back and we welcome the opportunity to meet with Town Staff and other user groups *virtually* or *face to face*, as appropriate, in the effort to find workable solutions to the issues we have raised in our response. We all need more conversation to share our expertise and create an action plan all parties can support. We must find reasonable and common sense solutions to the identified issues. We want to ensure that all User Groups programs remain viable, that everyone who uses the West Harbour is safe and at the same time, we must address and carefully consider municipal legal and moral responsibilities.

Respectfully,

Nancy Marshall, Past President, Survivor Thrivers

Steve Wilkes, Coach, Survivor Thrivers

Appendix A

Recommendation 7 *Enhance craft safety and reduce risks inside the Harbour by separating motor craft and self-powered craft* (page 13)

The Report-Back states on page 4 *“improving safety is a process with shared responsibilities between the Town of Cobourg and the Harbour users, especially for the implementation of the recommendations and managing the identified high-risk zones within the Harbour.”* This is the first time we have heard the words “shared responsibility”. We welcome the opportunity to participate in problem solving.

Since 2014 with Shoreline’s Plan and then in 2018 with thinc design, there have been diagrams and charts showing where we could paddle in the West Harbour. Our team members have been before Council and Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee to address these restrictions many times. On page 11 of the September 23, 2019, Lifesaving Society’s Audit Report, the areas highlighted in yellow and red are considered high risk areas. Look carefully at this diagram; you can clearly see the buildup of silt on the east side of the west break wall. Where will we paddle? We have stressed that this plan is not acceptable. Does your common sense tell you there is really room for dragon boats to practice and prepare for race day?

We understand that Town Staff and Lifesaving Society want to make sure that collisions do not happen. Guess what, we don’t want to be involved in a collision either.

Our club is realistic about where we paddle. On any given day, the weather conditions (wind, waves, and currents) dictate where in the harbour it is safe to paddle in order to optimize our practice. Our Coach is certified with Dragon Boat Canada and he checks the conditions and makes the determination of where it is safe to paddle. He is also aware of others on the water. We know how to share.

We know and understand the rules of boating safety. Several of our team members and most certainly our Coach have completed their Ontario Boating Licence. As boaters, we are vigilant and give power boats lots of room and full access to the water. When we leave our slip to begin a practice, we stop to check to make sure the way is clear. If a boat is leaving their dock to exit the harbour or if a boat is being launched at the boat ramp, we stay away until there is in clear open water. We know how to wait. As a team, we have had 21 years practicing in the harbour without incident.

There is a statement in the report that gives me hope *“The implementation and operationalization of this recommendation **would require considerable discussion with user groups in order to minimize the impact on existing programs and activities** and ensure fair access and use of Harbour by all groups.”* (page 13)

We are asking Council to set aside Recommendation 7 at this time to allow for Town and User Groups to have considerable discussion.

Appendix B

Recommendation 8 ***Ensure all user groups are using a safety boat for all organized activities and that operators are trained and certified in their use in order to be better prepared to respond to emergencies*** (page15)

There is a statement on page 17 of the Report-Back that really is concerning. *“None of the Harbour user groups provided specific examples of how these recommendations would drive them out of business.”* Recommendation 8 could be the final hurdle that The Survivor Thrivers would not be able to get over and would drive us out of the paddling business.

There is a cost factor involved in purchasing or renting a motorized safety boat that The Survivor Thrivers would find difficult to manage with our limited operating capital. The team is a registered charity and expenses and charitable donations are covered by member’s registration fees, donations, sponsorships and fund raising efforts. Given the current Covid-19 situation and the economic hardships, donations, sponsorships, and fundraising activities will be limited. The team simply cannot afford to buy or rent a Safety Boat. If a Safety Boat is mandated then the Cobourg Survivor Thrivers would be out of the business of paddling.

Note, that the Survivor Thrivers initially acquired our first dragon boat thanks to a donation from Cobourg Rotarians. We are so thankful that every year, the Town generously waives fees for use of our dock space. Community generosity supports our belief that we are **STRONGER TOGETHER!**

Last fall, Mayor Henderson on Municipal Matters was asked by Linda Kay’s, “Will the Town be purchasing their own safety boat?” The Mayor responded with, “Yes, absolutely!” Then, he qualified his response, “It would come with a cost” and “Would be nice to have.” Finally, the Mayor, wisely and realistically stated, “But right now, it’s not affordable”.

Do you think it would be affordable for our team or other recreational clubs to purchase our a safety boat? The Mayor said we need to use common sense. We are asking Council to use common sense with regard to this recommendation.

The Town states in the Report-Back that the “West Harbour is becoming increasingly populated by a variety of vessels, both self-propelled and motorized. Safety boats have been identified as a best practice and would represent a *negligible addition* to the congestion.” The Lifesaving Society’s statement on page 7 of the original audit report states *“separating motor craft and self-powered craft must be done to ensure everyone’s safety”*. If this is so, isn’t it contradictory to add another motorized craft.

Once again, The Survivor Thrivers have been paddling in Cobourg Harbour for 21 years ... no incidents requiring a safety boat. If there was a medical emergency involving one of our paddlers, by the time a safety boat arrived on scene and the paddler was transferred to the safety boat, then taken to the shore, our dragon boat could be at the shore or dock and the ambulance might have arrived. We do have a cell phone in the boat at all times.

If our dragon boat flips or is swamped, we have very clear guidelines:

- Stay with the boat
- Find your seat mate (Row 1 + drummer; Row 10 + Steer)
- Coach/Steer knows how many are out in the boat so we can quickly count off to account for all
- If help from shore is needed, we have a sound signalling devise and would give 3 long blasts
- A cell phone must be available when on the water for emergency calls
- Everyone must wear a Coast Guard Approved PDF

We are pleased that the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee has asked the Town to direct the Town of Cobourg's Risk Manager to conduct a full study of the Harbour Safety based on extensive consultation and observation. This information will be invaluable to establishing workable guidelines and procedures for ensuring the safety of all who participate in all non-motorized water sports. When operational guidelines are established, a cohesive implementation and communication plan can be devised so there is understanding and acceptance.

Therefore, we are asking Council to set aside Recommendations 8 at this time to allow for further discussion and investigation by Town Staff and all of the User Groups. We need to collaborate to develop appropriate policies and procedures. Common Sense must guide the work.