

STAFF REPORT

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF COBOURG



Report to:	Mayor and Council Members	Priority:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Low
Submitted by:	Laurie Wills Director, Public Works LWills@cobourg.ca	Meeting Type:	Open Session <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed Session <input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Date:	February 21, 2023		
Report No.:	Public Works-142-23		
Submit comments to Council			

Subject/Title: 2022 Waterfront Parking Update and Public Feedback Review

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Council receive this report for information.

FURTHER THAT Council provide direction to Staff for any proposed changes to the waterfront parking strategy in 2023 or consider continuing with the same waterfront parking strategy for another year with additional communications and education to further promote discounted resident passes.

1. STRATEGIC PLAN

Not applicable.

2. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

A 2022 Waterfront Parking Survey was posted on Engage Cobourg from January 18th until February 7th, 2023 to receive feedback from the public related to the implementation of changes made in 2022 to the waterfront parking areas, passes, rates and methods of payments.

Previous Community Engagement

- 2021 Beach Use Survey
- July 26, 2021 resolution No. 316-21 to establish a Waterfront Working Group to implement the results of the Beach Use Survey

- A Public Meeting was held on February 7, 2022 to share a presentation that summarized and explained the proposed parking opportunities and rate increases.
- February 14, 2022, Staff presented a report to Council incorporating the recommendations of the Waterfront Working Group which was approved by Council through resolution No. 063-22 on February 21, 2022.
 - Notices were circulated to all residents/addresses within the subject new paid parking area east of Victoria Park.
 - The DBIA board and all members also received a copy of the notice regarding proposed increased rates for downtown meters and lots.
- June 20, 2022 Staff presented a report to Council incorporating a summary of all responses received from new paid parking area east of Victoria Park and the recommendation to maintain one (1) parking pass per household was approved by Council.

3. PURPOSE

To provide Council with a review of Staff observations from the 2022 operating season and to provide the results of the follow up public survey.

4. ORIGIN AND LEGISLATION

November 15th, 2021 COW meeting Public Works Report No. 066-21
 December 6th, 2021 COW meeting Public Works Report No. 079-21
 January 24th, 2022 COW meeting Public Works Report No. 083-21
 February 14, 2022 COW meeting Public Works Report No. 094-22
 May 16, 2022, 2022 COW meeting Public Works Report No. 115-22
 June 20, 2022 COW meeting Public Works Report No. 122-22

5. BACKGROUND

In 2021, Cobourg Council asked the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) “to receive public input on how the Town of Cobourg can manage the popularity of Victoria Park Beach.” A survey was designed to inform Cobourg residents and gather feedback on options for managing and mitigating the impact of the high volume of visitors to Victoria Park Beach during a typical summer. The data received through the 2021 Beach Use Survey was intended to facilitate planning for the post-pandemic period.

With the support of the Waterfront Working Group, all comments received through the Beach Use Survey were reviewed and a summarized list of recommendations were presented to Council in January 2022. Of the 1,688 residents who contributed, two major themes that occurred were;

- To implement a resident parking pass for the waterfront; and
- Increase parking fees to offset the cost of infrastructure, beach maintenance and staffing requirements.

On February 21, 2022, Council approved the implementation of a revised waterfront parking strategy including significant rate increases, new paid parking areas, revised enforcement hours and fines, and new resident passes.

The roll out of the plan was funded by the parking reserve and budgeted under a capital project for the purchase of new pay & display machines, new smart meters, line painting and signage. Due to a shortage of supply in 2022, the pay & display machines were not delivered prior to the Victoria Day weekend despite being ordered on February 25th following Council approval. Instead, Staff proposed to relocate the downtown pay & display machines to the waterfront parking areas and have free parking in the downtown for the summer.

Staff have been tracking comments/concerns raised throughout the year to improve operations for the 2023 waterfront season. Council also requested that a survey be conducted again to receive feedback on the first year of implementation.

6. ANALYSIS

A. Waterfront Survey Results

A total of 485 people responded to the survey. Each question asked of participants and the results are included below as well as any follow up recommendations/comments from Staff.

1. *Please select which of the Resident Waterfront Seasonal Passes you purchased in 2022?*

Results:

- 32.6% Resident Waterfront Season Pass
- 4.9% East Beach Waterfront Season Pass
- 62.5% I did not purchase a Resident Waterfront Seasonal Pass

The below chart depicts the actual number of Waterfront Passes issued for the 2022 season:

Pass Type	Number of Passes Issued
Resident Waterfront Season Pass	1,081
East Beach Waterfront Season Pass	104
Waterfront Daily Pass	482

There were many comments in the survey that suggested residents were not aware of the resident seasonal pass or its cost. Advertising in 2022 was delayed due to the unknown delivery date of parking infrastructure. Staff did not receive notice that machines would not be arriving in time for Victoria Day weekend until May 11 2022, so it was uncertain whether passes could be sold at all until after

that date when it was decided to move the downtown machines to the waterfront. An investment in a marketing mailout would benefit all residents to better understand parking options and costs and would be funded by parking revenues.

2. How often did you use the Resident Waterfront Season Pass?

Results:

18.8%	Daily
59.1%	Weekly
8.3%	Monthly
13.3%	Rarely
0.6%	Never

3. Do you feel that the price of the Resident Waterfront Season Pass was a good value for five (5) months of parking in the waterfront area (\$40/household and \$20/East Beach household)?

Results:

59.4%	Yes
40.6%	No

The majority of participants agreed that the price of the Resident Waterfront Season pass was good value however there were many comments that requested the seasonal pass be free or discounted further. Several requested a free day pass (or several) be issued with tax bills.

4. Would you support the implementation of a semi-discounted Waterfront Season Parking Pass for non-Cobourg residents? (The rate, to be determined at a later date, would not be as significantly discounted as the resident pass for Cobourg taxpayers.)

Results:

42.9%	Yes
57.1%	No

The implementation of the resident pass was well received however proved to be a challenge to administer. The new pay & display machines were delayed being delivered until the fall/winter 2022 despite being ordered as soon as Council provided approval in February. As a result, Staff had to relocate the downtown machines under short notice in order to be ready for Victoria Day weekend. The sale of passes also began during tax payment due time for the finance department creating a significant resource strain where Staffing was already experiencing a shortage.

Throughout sales of Resident Waterfront Season Passes, Town Staff and Council also received requests for discounted waterfront passes from Northumberland County residents. It should be noted that there was only a

total of four (4) Resident Waterfront Pass requests that were not fulfilled due to the individual's not meeting requirements of living within the Town of Cobourg boundaries.

The Town of Cobourg's parking software allowed Staff to set up Resident passes based on the tax roll from the Town of Cobourg however there were challenges with regards to acquiring rental/tenant information for multi-unit addresses and allowing multiple renters/tenants under the same address to purchase more than one pass for each address (per unit). The service for resident passes was designed to be self-serve (online) for ease of administration however it is understandable that not all residents have access to computers/internet etc., and as an alternative, residents were able to either phone in or buy a pass in person. Finance Staff were trained how to enter a pass in the software using key address information entered in a specific format which would then show if the resident had purchased a pass or not to ensure that there were no duplicate passes sold.

The majority of the survey participants did not support the offering of a discounted pass to non-residents however Engage Cobourg is only for Cobourg residents, so visitors were not able to fill out the survey. Staff are prepared to issue a separate survey for visitors to comment on the interest of a non-resident pass as there have been notes received through emails and social media from non-residents wanting this option. The survey will only be issued if there is interest on Council's part to consider a non-resident pass. Should Council choose to implement a non-resident pass, Staff can offer the following information.

Staff have reviewed and discussed the opportunity of offering a discounted pass for County-wide residents and determined that it would not be a viable option due to the resource requirements that would be necessary for the implementation and administration of the pass, such as:

- a. All municipal addresses within the County of Northumberland as well as renter/tenant information for all multi-unit residences and ownership data would first have to be obtained and then entered into a format that could be uploaded to the Town's parking software.
- b. County residents would be required to purchase passes online only, simply due to the limited resources available to manually accept drop in pass purchasers from the entire County.
- c. Unlikely to receive 100% complete/accurate information creating increased phone calls and in person inquiries to troubleshoot.
- d. Passes purchased online require an upload of proof of residency which must be vetted manually by Staff, causing a decrease in service delivery and efficiency from those Staff members responsible for reviewing passes while also creating delays in issuing passes should there be a significant number to review.

As an alternative, Council can consider a Visitor Waterfront Season Pass at a discounted rate that would be available to anyone living outside of Cobourg boundaries. The ability to provide this option is due to there not being a requirement for purchasers to provide address information. The only limitation would be that passes would be required to be purchased online only. It is recommended that the discounted visitor pass be priced at a range of \$90 for a three (3) month pass (June/July/August) or \$150 for a five (5) month pass (May-Oct). Either of these rate structures will ensure equity with the downtown lot passes valued at \$30/month. Purchases would have to utilize the pass for a minimum of three or four visits at eight (8) hours each, respectively, to ensure good value.

5. *The Resident Waterfront Season Passes were limited to one pass per household. (Each pass could be registered to two vehicles). Were there circumstances this summer when you required more than one season pass?*

Results:

19%	Yes
81%	No

6. *Answer this question only if you have chosen 'Yes' for #5*

How often did you require a second pass?

Results:

5.9%	One (1) time
48.2%%	One (1) to five (5) times
25.9%	Five (5) to 10 times
20%	10+ times

The majority of participants indicated that they did not need more than one pass and those who did, the majority indicated that they may have needed a second pass 1 to 5 times throughout the summer season.

7. *Answer this question only if you have chosen 'Yes' for #6*

What were the circumstances that led you to require a second pass?

Results:

Reasons provided for needing a second pass were for family/friends visiting and a few who had more than two (2) vehicles registered to the address.

24 participants had purchased an east beach resident pass and only 13 responses were provided for how often a second pass was needed. Of those,

6 respondents required a pass 10+ times for visitors, construction projects, and additional vehicles registered to the address.

Additional comments received during the public engagement period between November 18th to December 2nd 2021, included only one suggestion that more than one pass be issued per household.

There are 460 residential addresses and 176 parking spaces available in the east beach residential area. There are approximately 8,500 municipal addresses in Cobourg and 520 parking spaces in the remainder of the waterfront area.

Based on the limited number of parking spots in the East Beach area and the high number of residential addresses in the East Beach area and the availability of parking on private property and the limited hours of enforcement between 9am and 4pm, it is not recommended that more than one pass be available for each residential property in Cobourg.

Should Council wish to permit additional passes to East Beach residents for compassionate reasons, it is recommended Council delegate authority to Staff to administer requests for one (1) additional pass where only one (1) license plate will be registered to the pass at a cost of \$40. An application form will be prepared for residents to submit for consideration. Additional pass requests beyond one, must be approved by Council.

8. *Would you purchase a 2023 Resident Waterfront Season Pass?*

Results:

58%	Yes
42%	No

A similar number of participants who indicated that the price of the season pass was good value, also indicated that they would purchase a season pass in 2023.

9. *Were you aware that the Town offered a lot for Resident Waterfront Season Pass holders only?*

Results:

32.5%	Yes
67.5%	No

10. *Did you utilize the Resident Only parking area, located in the Charles St. Lot?*

Results:

11.9%	Yes
51.4%	No

- 31.3% I would have had I known about it.
- 5.4% No, I don't think this lot is required.

A recommendation of the Waterfront Working Group was to designate a 'resident season pass only' parking lot. Staff implemented this recommendation in 2022 by utilizing the Charles St Lot for this purpose. By-law enforcement officers reported that the Charles St lot was underutilized during the summer season, and at less than half capacity at most times. There are 18 parking spaces in the Charles St lot.

Approximately 12% of participants indicated they utilized the Charles St Lot and over 30% indicated that they would have, had they known about the option.

Staff are recommending that the utilization of Charles St lot be monitored again in 2023 and considered to be converted back to regular waterfront parking use in 2024.

11. Did you visit the Cobourg Waterfront Area this summer, go to the beach or attend an event this season?

Results:

- 90.7% Yes
- 9.3% No

12. Answer this question only if you have chosen 'Yes' for #11

What type of parking did you utilize?

Results:

- 9.8% Waterfront Parking Lot (\$40 day pass)
- 12% Waterfront Parking Lot (\$5/hour for time required)
- 4.7% Waterfront On Street parking (\$40 day pass)
- 9.2% Waterfront On Street parking (\$5/hour for time required)
- 2.3% East Beach Area Day Pass (\$40/day - Henry/Perry/Bay/Green/Church St)
- 21.7% Resident Waterfront Parking pass (\$40/season or \$20/season for East Beach Area residents)
- 40.3% Other (please specify)

The results of this question indicated that all forms of parking were utilized but more interestingly is the fact that nearly half of the participants made their way to the waterfront without paying for parking at all. Approximately the same number of participants indicated that they did not buy a season pass this year nor would they buy one in 2023. These results indicate that there is still good opportunity to utilize the waterfront for free such as by walking, parking in a free area, drop off, bicycle or transit.

13. What method of payment did you use for parking?

Results:

- 49.9% On Street Hourly Parking (Cash or credit at the machine)
- 2.5% Day Pass
- 47.6.3% Seasonal Pass

It was heard through comments that there is a need for more machines as it was confusing how to pay for parking. This will be addressed with the installation of additional smart meters in 2023. Last year, we did not receive our shipment of smart meters due to the supply shortage so we had to direct people to utilize the closest pay and display machine. The meters will be installed in areas where parking spots are more isolated and should help to alleviate that confusion.

**14. Answer this question only if you have chosen Day Pass for #13.
How did you purchase your Day Pass?**

Results:

- 23.1% Purchased on Town of Cobourg website
- 7.7% Purchased in person at Victoria Hall
- 7.7% Purchased over the phone
- 61.5% Purchased using Honk Mobile

A total of 10,633 Honk Mobile transactions (hourly rate payments) were processed from May 20 to October 10 inclusive.

**15. Answer this question if you have chosen Seasonal Pass for #13
How did you purchase your Season Pass?**

Result:

- 56.7% Purchased on the Town of Cobourg website
- 41.6% Purchased in person at Victoria Hall
- 1.7% Purchased over the phone

For those residents who registered online with the Town when purchasing a pass in 2022 whether online or in person, buying a pass in 2023 will be that much easier since all required information is already available in their account. As more and more residents purchase an annual pass, there will be less onus on Staff for processing parking pass purchases in person.

16. Did the increase in parking rates deter you from visiting the Cobourg Waterfront in 2022?

Result:

51.8% Yes
48.2% No

17. Did the increase in parking rates deter you from visiting any community events at the Cobourg Waterfront in 2022?

Result:

46.9% Yes
53.1% No

18. Did the information provided make it clear that paying by the hour was an option versus purchasing a full day pass?

Result:

65.2% Yes
34.8%% No

Over 65% of participants noted that they felt the signage was clear about the option to pay hourly parking at \$5/hr in addition to the \$40/day pass option. Many comments suggested that there was a misunderstanding that only \$40 day passes were available. Future marketing and signage will continue to encourage the hourly parking rates and once the smart meters are operational, it will be easier for users to pay by credit card.

19. The East Beach parking area was designated for Daily and Season Pass Holders only. Would you like to see hourly paid parking available in the East Beach Area by Utilizing Honk Mobile?

Result:

40.2% Yes
59.8% No

Unfortunately, there is not enough information available from the results of the survey to understand why the majority of participants did not want hourly parking in the East Beach area in addition to the daily pass option. Comments would suggest that the signage in this area needs improvement. Staff will also improve the messaging for the online daily pass application as it is believed that when non-residents enter their residential addresses, a warning message displays that 'the address provided is not eligible for a Resident Waterfront Season pass' which leads to the assumption that they cannot buy any permit and they may not read the entire screen that would lead them to other available passes. Visitors can still select a Daily Waterfront Visitor pass by

simply saving their address and continuing with the application process online. There is no capacity for day passes to sell out.

Staff are in support of adding hourly parking as a payment option in the East Beach Area to maximize parking opportunities for visitors and residents who are not spending the entire day at the Cobourg Waterfront. An hourly paid parking option will also improve opportunities for short term visitors of the east beach residents. Honk Mobile will be utilized to offer hourly parking in this area in the interest of cost savings. Pay and display machines are solar powered and the trees in the area would impact their operation.

20. Did the new signage allow you to easily understand how to pay for parking?

Result:

- 41.4% Yes
- 45.5% No
- 13.1% Other

Town Staff created large signage for pay & display areas outlining rates, hours, payment options and beach rules for parking lots as well as on-street parking areas. Updates to signs in 2023 will include decals for newly accepted 'Tap' payments such as, Interac® Flash, Visa payWave™, Mastercard® PayPass™, Apple Pay® and Google Pay™.

Staff are recommending updates to existing signage in the east beach area to include an additional payment option for hourly parking through Honk Mobile. Signs currently read 'Pass Holders Only' and is suggested that 'Only' be removed and a Honk Mobile Decal be added showing motorists the Zone ID as well as the QR Code for scanning.

Comments also suggested that it was confusing to know what area (waterfront or downtown) of Cobourg they were parking in when onsite and without a map. Staff will consider how meters and pay & display machines can be better identified as being 'waterfront' or 'downtown'.

B. Parking Tickets/Fines

Approximately 2,685 parking tickets were issued within the waterfront area by bylaw enforcement officers from May 20 to October 10 inclusive. The below chart indicates the number of tickets issued, as well as the current status of tickets:

Number of Tickets	Status
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330	Trials Requested
92	Withdrawn
352	Warning Issued
415	Voided
1,108	Paid in Full (paid within 15 days of Parking Infraction)
251	Court (the Town will receive the ticket total from the Provincial Offences office),
137	Paid at Court (to be paid through the Provincial Offences Office).

Comments were received that fines were too much for parking tickets.

C. 2023 Communications Strategy

The communications rollout of new parking changes ahead of the 2022 Victoria Day weekend was a challenging endeavor. The position of Communications Manager was vacant for several months leading up to the sales of resident passes, the finance department was overwhelmed with Staff shortages as well as tax season and the new waterfront parking strategy involved many changes all at once. Understandably there was confusion and frustrations heard from residents which Staff will endeavor to address in the 2023 waterfront season.

Staff have held several debriefing meetings following the 2022 summer season to discuss what was experienced and learned in order to plan for a better approach in 2023.

Town Staff identified the necessity to improve communications to residents and visitors alike well ahead of the 2023 waterfront season which will include but not be limited to the following:

- **Tax Bill Messaging** – reminder in tax bills for residents to purchase seasonal passes in advance of the summer season (April/May).
- **‘Spring into Parking’ information sessions** – Staff will be hosting information sessions at Victoria Hall for the public to drop in and ask questions and learn about parking options. A form will be available to fill out prior to purchasing a season pass to ensure residents have the required information available before purchasing a pass either in person or online.
- **Parking Brochure** – The Communications department has developed a parking brochure that will assist residents and visitors navigate parking Downtown and at the Waterfront as well as provide information on the optional parking passes that are available to them.
- **Social Media:** Staff will post regular updates and reminders regarding parking information and passes to the Town’s social media pages. The Communications department will partner with

the Marketing and Events department to ensure consistent messaging is shared among all our tourism networks. Staff will invest budget into social media advertising to boost messaging in advance of busy long weekends.

- **Public Notice:** The Communications Department will issue out a public notice to local media when seasonal parking passes go on sale.
- **Cobourg.ca:** Staff will update the current parking page on Cobourg.ca to ensure ease of navigation for all residents and visitors.
- **Town Ad Block:** The Communications Department will include regular messaging regarding Waterfront Parking passes available to residents in the Town of Cobourg Ad Block with Northumberland News.
- **Posters:** An informational poster will be developed and posted at all municipal buildings.
- **Hello Cobourg Newsletter:** The Communications department will provide information to residents through the Town of Cobourg Hello Cobourg Newsletter
- **Mailout:** Staff can distribute an informational postcard to all Cobourg residents through Canada Post at the direction of Council (~\$3,000).

Communications will commence upon approval from Council regarding waterfront parking fares and passes for 2023 in case there should be proposed changes.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/BUDGET IMPACTS

The below chart depicts the type of passes issued in the waterfront area and the revenue generated from Victoria Day weekend to Thanksgiving weekend:

Pass Type	# of Passes	Revenue
Resident Waterfront Season Pass	1,078	\$43,120.00
East Beach Resident Season Waterfront Pass	104	\$2,080.00
Waterfront Daily Pass	482	\$19,280.00

The below chart depicts the payment method of hourly parking and the revenue collected from Victoria Day weekend to Thanksgiving weekend:

Hourly Payment Type	Revenue
Honk Mobile (10,633 transactions)	\$129,273.12
Pay & Display Machines (41,530 transactions)	\$385,001.80

The below chart depicts the number of tickets issued in the waterfront area and the revenue associated from Victoria Day weekend to Thanksgiving weekend:

Number of Tickets Issued	Estimated Revenue Generated
2,685	\$278,640.00

The revenue is estimated since there are still outstanding tickets that have not been settled yet with the County and also the software cannot separate tickets that are issued in the downtown vs waterfront parking areas.

Parking Reserve Contribution

The following chart depicts a history of annual revenues and transfers to reserves.

Year	Total Revenue	Transfer to Parks/Waterfront	Transfer to Parking Reserve
2022	\$869,045.00	\$219,300	\$355,717
2021	\$116,136.82	\$0	\$45,621.13
2020	\$124,688.18	\$0	(\$100,158.60)
2019	\$319,446.62	\$44,177	\$0
2018	\$342,620.32	\$152,000	\$82,000
2017	\$303,716.19	\$0	\$68,170.95
2016	\$536,145.76	\$138,340.00	\$234,442.41

There were more savings transferred to the parking reserve in 2022 than from 2016 to 2021 combined and nearly the same for the contribution to parks/waterfront operations. Funds from the parking reserve will be utilized in 2023 to conduct a parking study that will consider future options for Cobourg when we can no longer rely on private lands for parking lots. It is expected that the outcome of the study will provide cost estimates and recommendations for Council to prepare a by-law for the dedication of parking reserve funds in order to secure a long range financial plan for the recommended solution and minimize the impact to tax payers.

8. CONCLUSION

THAT Council receive this report for information.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Waterfront Parking 2022 Review - Public Works-142-23.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Feb 10, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

No Signature - Task assigned to Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer was completed by workflow administrator Krystal Christopher, Deputy Clerk

Tracey Vaughan, Chief Administrative Officer - Feb 10, 2023 - 2:52 PM