

The Staffen Family

St. Marys Golf & Country Club Limited

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November 23, 2017

Town of St. Marys

175 Queen Street East,
St. Marys, ON, N4X 1B6

Re: Recreation & Leisure Services Master Plan

Attention: Mark Stone, Planner MLS Planning

mark@mlsplanning.ca

Cc. Brent Kittmer, CAO

Dear Mark (and Brent)

Our family has been very fortunate to live in this community since 1971. We have invested continually in our Community; both in our businesses and with our charities of choice.

St. Marys is blessed with many unique and incredible recreation and leisure facilities including the Pyramid Centre, Grand Trunk (and other trails), paved roads outside our community for cycling, Wildwood Park, the St. Marys museum, the St. Marys library, the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, refurbished tennis courts, the Quarry, the Curling rink and three Golf Courses in our area.

Even more remarkable are the beauty of our stone buildings, our downtown, our green bridge, the Thames River and Trout Creek connection, Central School Manor, the stunning Town Hall, the Andrews Building downtown, our main street Victoria Bridge, the St. Marys Hospital, the VIA rail station, beautiful churches, and much more.

We could be **great**; a destination centre for visitors, a special place to live and work and a community to locate a new business or industry.

Our family looks at the Recreation & Leisure Services Master Plan as an **OPPORTUNITY** to solve some of the critical issues our community has and work towards the 30 year plan in partnership with community leaders, local businesses, foundations and residents.

I had sent (and delivered at the Open House) a previous letter to Todd Brown, President/Principal Planner at Monteith Brown (copy cc'd to the Town). After a follow up request to meet with his team was ignored, Todd and I talked on the phone. He acknowledged receiving my correspondence; however, he felt that since a second draft version of the Master Plan was in the hands of Town staff- *Todd felt that any recommendation would have to come from staff*. He also stated that they were not in the business of writing a business plan for the Pyramid Recreation Centre; of which I strongly disagree.

I was fortunate enough to Chair the original group of remarkable people that wrote the Business Plan "The Living Life Project Community Services Plan".

I have shortened the recommendations in my original correspondence to provide insight into the final draft of the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan. As a Community what we require is actionable plan (not another report that sits on a shelf).

We have this **incredible Opportunity before us:**

- ❖ The Number One Priority of our Community is to address the **Pyramid Recreation Centre (PRC)** Issues (revenues NOT costs like in 2012 study). The economics show that the PRC can only survive with a Fitness Centre; it is a revenue issue. This facility is the number one attraction for industry, sports tourism and our residents;

Summary Recommendations #1, #13, #14, #19, #20, #32, #34, #35, #36, #37, #40, #41 and #48

- (a) A stand alone Pool is financially unsustainable operational cost wise. The original Pyramid Centre concept included a Fitness Centre and an indoor walking track. This issue needs to be solved. Closing Cadzow pool was the right decision as it will allow greater access and increased revenues to the Pyramid Centre Pool.
 - (b) Look at alternatives as a Business Case; we need to find a partner to build/renovate (provide) a Fitness Centre at the Pyramid Centre.
 - 1. This can be the YMCA relocated from the Wellness Centre (attendance has fallen 5 years in a row [>500 estimate] and the model will not survive as it is at this location- business fact, as many seniors no longer use the facility, nor is it attracting new members.) **FIRST CHOICE IS THE YMCA.**
 - 2. Failing the relocation from the Wellness Centre- pursue another concept for a Fitness Centre to the Pyramid Centre. Projected memberships of 2,000 members (including families) as with the senior complex, ice rink, the pool/fitness combination and other amenities every family will want to become members. Good Life Fitness, Goderich model and Leamington model as examples.
 - (c) Shut down the Recreation Hall rentals for weddings, and some special events; we can't compete with the private sector. Meeting rooms can still be rented.
 - (d) **Utilize this space** by adding 'Picketball Courts' [both seniors and youth centre] as part of the fitness membership (growth area), basketball courts and an indoor walking track (above and joined to the upper floor area) at the Pyramid Centre.
 - (e) **Unique Community Special Events like the Hospital Foundation Gala** and others can still be held in this space (perfect wooden floors) with temporary removal of the courts (can easily be built that way like arenas are today).
 - (f) Consider outsourcing the management of the Recreation Centre to the YMCA or Good Life. Goderich, Leamington, Gravenhurst and all the new Community Centre's around London as examples.
 - (g) The Advisory Board is an excellent idea (possibly a Board of Directors is required),
 - (h) It is interesting to note that ideas (a), (b), (e) and (f) plus the Smart and Caring Community Fund below were included in the original business case for the Pyramid Centre in 2006
 - (i) Our projected growth in population to 8,320 can support the Pyramid Centre in this format.
- ❖ The Second Priority with the YMCA is adding a Day Care to the PRC.
 - (a) St. Marys does an incredible job with our town run day care; however in order to attract young families to this Community we need more Day Care space.
 - (b) The YMCA is exceptional at this model.
 - ❖ The Third Priority is to create another Smart and Caring Community Foundation within the Stratford Perth Community Foundation. Goal of \$1,000,000 with the income earned annually to go to Parks, Recreation and Trails.

Summary Recommendations #1, #17, #25, #29, #31

- (a) In the original business case for the Pyramid Centre in 2006, the committee offered to raise \$4,000,000 with \$1,000,000 put in a Community Foundation for Parks, Trails and Recreation. Over \$5,000,000 was raised, yet the Foundation idea was never pursued. Where would we be now if we had this Community Foundation? In addition the Funds, a significant portion of the Funds raised went
- (b) If Cash is accepted in lieu of parkland for subdivision development, the amount is doubled and put into the Foundation.
- (c) Promote donations and Family estates, Gifts and Gifts of Insurance to the Foundation.

- (d) With the Active Transportation Plan and the New Official Plan encourage land donations to the Foundation.
- (e) The idea of raising money for the NEW Fitness Centre concept and the Foundation could involve the original donors under the direction of the Economic Development staff member.

❖ The Fourth Priority is to develop and improve our Trail System; it is not just about St. Marys- it is about Perth County and Stratford [Connecting the dots]:

Summary Recommendations #1, #3, #20, #21, #23, #25, #27, #28, #29, #30 and #31

- (a) We need to continue to invest in our walking trails. There should be a long term plan to encircle the town (including any new developments), that it should be lit (solar lighting) and paved, widened to include BIKE lanes (for kids to get to school, seniors walking, dogs walking, outdoor activities that lower long term health costs), that it should be signed to lead to downtown (already excellent) and other points of interest (Eaton House/ PM Meighen grave/Junction station/historical buildings downtown). Funding could be shared with a Community Group on a \$1 from the Town for every \$3 dollars raised privately.
- (b) Every City in Canada and the United States are embracing Cycling Trails [London \$15M]
- (c) Tie in CBHF and the Quarry with the Trail system,
- (d) **Work with other Communities, charitable organizations, citizens and business to create a Paved Cycling Trail from St. Marys to Stratford [Possibly with the Avon Maitland Trail]**
- (e) **Every new Road**, the Developer is required to included a Cycling Lane at their Cost,
- (f) **Every repaired road**, a Cycling lane is added during the design and construction process.
- (g) That is how it starts; communities working together.

The Recreation & Leisure Services Master Plan needs to be an actionable plan for the Community; we have a rare Opportunity.

Mark and Brent, I have never felt better about our future with the work you and your Team are doing for our Community. Our Family is forever grateful.

Rob

[Rob, Sharon, Matt and Ashton Staffen]

Owners of the St.Marys Golf & CC and other Businesses in our Community

Co-Founders of the Brain and Mind Matters Community Foundation

Chair of the Presbyterian Church Enduring Mission Foundation (Legacy Fund)