

**MEDWAY CREEK BRIDGE PROPOSAL**  
**COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS MEETING**

MARCH 11, 2009 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Committee Room 1, City Hall

Community Participants

Dean O'Neal	Sunningdale/Richmond Community Association
Chris Callaghan	Sunningdale/Richmond Community Association
Chester Pawlowski	Old Masonville Ratepayers Association
George Lightfoot	Old Masonville Ratepayers Association
Rob Marles	Attawandron Residents Association
Michael DeFabio	Attawandron Residents Association
Connie Zolotar	Whitehills Community Association
Terry Macpherson	Gainsborough South Community Association
Councilor W. Lonc	Ward 7
Councilor N. Branscombe	Ward 6
Ryner Stoetzen	Lower Medway Valley Ratepayers Group Inc.
Sandy Levin	Lower Medway Valley Ratepayers Group Inc.

City Staff

Rob Panzer	General Manager Planning & Development - Chair
Andrew Macpherson	Manager Parks Planning & Design
Bonnie Bergsma	Ecologist Planner - minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions were made.
2. Purpose and Objective of the meeting was discussed:
  - a) To provide a common ground and understanding of the issue
  - b) To clarify issues of concern
  - c) To allow active discussion of issues
  - d) To achieve a resolution for moving forward
  - e) To prepare a report to go to City Council
3. Presentations
  - a) Andrew Macpherson made a presentation of the project background and description and distributed some handouts
  - b) Sandy Levin made a presentation of his community association concerns about the project
4. Roundtable discussion to clarify issues of concern and allow active discussion
  - a) Issues and responses
  - b) Additional Community Association comments
  - c) Comments by Ward Councilors
5. Meeting Outcomes – Staff recommendation
6. Next Steps based on consensus

### **3a) Parks Planning & Design Presentation**

#### Relevant Background Documents

Official Plan Policy  
London Valley Lands Study, 1975  
Medway Valley Heritage Forest Conservation Master Plan, 1989  
Medway Valley Subwatershed Study, 1995  
Medway Valley Heritage Forest Site Planning Study, 1996  
Medway Area Plan, 1999  
Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2002  
Bicycle Master Plan, 2005  
Facility Accessibility Design Standards, 2007

The 1<sup>st</sup> Creek Crossing was proposed in the 1989 plan which showed a blue path in the same location, but this proposal was sent back by Council for further study (Handout 1)

The Site Planning study was approved by Council in October 1996 except for the provisions that no bikeways be established in the Medway Valley; and that the route linking Gainsborough and Windermere Roads be kept alive for future consideration, but not a priority (Hand out 2 – Page 3). Council also required additional study of the stepping stone crossings for environmental impact, safety and liability (Handout 2)

The Bridge crossing in the Bicycle Master Plan was shown as a Recreational Route (not a commuter route).

Multi-use trail surfaces were changed from gravel to asphalt due to erosion of gravel on slopes.

Implementation of other site plan recommendations included installation of bike barricades, a large wooden staircase, signage and enforcement of Park By-laws.

#### Medway Valley Recent Activities

- Trunk Sanitary Sewer Environmental Assessment
- Snake Creek erosion stabilization
- pathways
- community requested crossings
  - Glen Ridge to Fanshawe
  - Snake Creek Pathway
  - Wonderland to Black Acres
  - Link to UWO

Since 1996 new community associations have been formed, but Guiding Principles of trail design remain valid.

Main issue to resolve is that “large structures are undesirable”

Additional evaluation of the proposed bridge will require an Environmental Impact Study. The LMVRPA also funded this project through fundraising and a matching grant from the London Community Foundation. It was noted by the Association that the staircase needs maintenance.

### **3b) Lower Medway Valley Ratepayers Group Inc. Presentation**

The Site Planning Study preferred option was a hybrid of two options that achieved a consensus by all parties. The valley was not to be used as for bicycle commuter use.

The Lower Medway Valley Ratepayers Group Inc. found out about the proposed bridge crossing by accident through the venue of another meeting (UTRCA in May, 2008) attended by Jeff Bruin with a display map showing the bike path and bridge over the Medway Creek. The project was also presented to TREA in June, 2008.

Their community association is concerned about lack of process and that steps were taken to advance the project without notification, wants this proposal to go through a wider public process. They do not want to separate the ESA into parts and treat them as different based on their sensitivity. They are concerned for the potential impact on their neighbourhood and the ESA from increased use of the ESA. The LMVRG are concerned that different elevations between two sides of the bridge will result in significant site alteration.

In 1996 there were three distinct groups :

1. A group that did not accept any crossings
2. A group that generally agreed to the idea
3. A group that supported the idea provided it was

As the Medway Valley Conservation Master Plan is to be updated shortly, they would like the consideration of the bridge crossing proposal to be part of that process with lots of consultation.

### **4a) Roundtable discussion to clarify issues of concern and allow active discussion**

**ISSUE 1:** Some people thought that no bridge would ever be allowed based on the 1996 Site Planning Study. When did council rescind the recommendation of “no large structure in the valley”

**RESPONSE:** There are 24 years of expectations about a potential bridge crossing. This issue is not new. The context for the crossing came from background documents – master plans, etc. and never contemplated cars. The Site Planning Study proposed four “stepping stone” crossings. It is now 13 years later and there are other city initiatives to be addressed. The Site Plan contemplated a crossing.

N.B. -There are 13 years of expectations by the LMVRPA that the consensus the city participated was still in place.

**ISSUE 2:** Will the bridge need access for sewer maintenance?

**RESPONSE:** Sewer trucks will not be permitted to cross the bridge. There may be some crossing by City parks operations maintenance staff in pickup trucks. The bridge is for pedestrians, cyclists and will be fully accessible.

**ISSUE 3:** Where there be additional study requirements before July?

**RESPONSE:** A spring inventory will be carried out by the City Ecologist to look for Species-at-Risk in the vicinity of the bridge location. This location is less sensitive than other areas with respect to potential environmental impacts; however, an environmental impact study will be required. the bridge may have visual impacts (positive and negative); it will keep people out of the more sensitive areas.

The LMVRPA does not accept without being shown where it has happened before, that infrastructure in an ESA will keep people out of the more sensitive areas. It has asked for and not received either published or city documented confirmation of this assertion.

**ISSUE 4:** There will be increased user impacts on the ESA by making this more accessible.

**RESPONSE:** It has been demonstrated that better management of trails and access points results in fewer infractions and illegal activities even if there is an increase in public use. This has been supported through SEPTED training which shows improved access leads to fewer crimes. The Conservation Authority carries out By-law enforcement for activities not permitted within an ESA.

Although the city has said it has been demonstrated that better management of trails and access points results in fewer infractions and illegal activities, the LMVRPA has the opinion of a law enforcement consultant and former senior officer in the London Police that the opposite is true.

**ISSUE 5:** What form of mitigation will be required?

**RESPONSE:** There will be 6-8m wide disturbance pathway which will be restored with native species according to specific plant community guidelines. The bridge will span the Medway with no impacts in the creek.

LMVRPA asks for clarification as to on what basis the claim is made that there are less impacts of the proposed bridge on the creek than “low tech” options. It was not clear from the minutes or the meeting what low tech options were.

**ISSUE 6:** There is a perceived lack of process and transparency.

**RESPONSE:** Public process is a by-law requirement and there is a commitment to have more discussion and consultation before final approval. Early discussions with some groups have occurred, largely because Transport Canada required a CEA because the Medway is a navigable river. The concept was advanced in order to address this requirement, and through the process to obtain approval in principle from T.C. some community groups and EPW estate were also informed.

Some community groups were also informed about the project, but not the history.

LMVRPA was not informed at all.”

**ISSUE 7:** Lack of community consultation for over three years. How are the Community Associations going to be kept informed?

**RESPONSE:** The gap in communication occurred because funding for new projects in the Medway Valley ran out.

LMVRPA believes the lack of community consultation has been closer to 10 years than to three years. It seemed to have stopped after Phase 1 of the Site Plan was implemented

**ISSUE 8:** Will the timing of construction still be for July?

**RESPONSE:** There is no commitment for July construction.

**ISSUE 9:** Linkages to an ESA versus through an ESA.

**RESPONSE:** This linkage will provide a crossing between the valley across the longest barrier for connections in the City. There is a city-wide public interest to achieve linkage of communities. There must be regard for the overall public interest and not just small neighbourhood community groups.

**ISSUE 10 :** Mandatory public meeting for the CEA (Transport Canada)

**RESPONSE:** The E.A. public meeting is technical and regulatory for D.F.O. sign off. Transport Canada requires the bridge to be minimum 3 m above water. There has to be more than this statutory public meeting to bring neighbors together to inform all and to have a fuller discussion.

#### **4b) Additional Community Association Comments**

Representatives from the *Old Masonville Ratepayers Association* stated that as users of the valley on a regular basis, they see a lot of use and appreciation. They believe that the amount of research and responses to concerns about the bridge has been very good and they support the need to link communities. If the common goal is to protect the area to the south of the bridge, then by joining the two sides of the valley, the City will be better able to protect the more sensitive areas. Their CA is making a leap of faith to trust that the City staff are doing their due diligence and they feel there has been lots of public consultation through this process.

Representatives from the *Lower Medway Valley Ratepayers Group Inc.* felt letdown and angry because the decision to build the bridge appeared to be moving forward without a process. They want to see the data that says destroying the forest in one area will save the forest in other areas. They see themselves as stewards of the area and feel the process hasn't addressed their concerns. If there is no hurry to build the bridge, why go forward so fast.

#### **4c) Comments from Ward Councilors**

Councilor Branscombe felt that people lobbying for their perspectives will lead to confrontation. It is better to have a broader consultation process to hear all points of view, resolve conflicts between neighborhood associations and allow the process to move forward. The public want fair treatment and a fair outcome.

Councilor Lonc felt that there should be a specific meeting outside of the mandatory meeting for the EA. He recommended that the City host an unbiased public meeting run by staff to address two problems:

- 1) The bridge as an essential public linkage; and
- 2) no bridge.

## **5. Meeting Outcomes – staff recommendation**

City staff suggested that the group should revisit the principles of use to answer questions about what is large ?, what is undesirable ? who should be consulted and how should the consultation process be undertaken? Rob Panzer suggested that the City should host one large community meeting with presentation by City staff and their recommendation to Planning Committee. The public has opportunity to listen and make their own decision and their own presentation of concerns and issues based on all information received. It seems to be the right thing to do given all city objectives and minimum public notice requirements to be met. A report would go to Council on the consultation process describing the history and timeframe. Council will provide the direction to: go ahead/ delay/ not do it.

## **6. Next Steps – consensus of group**

There was consensus among the group to having one large public forum/ Open House followed by a meeting to generate comments. This will give each community association an opportunity to go to their community to get opinions. If a balanced approach is presented then all community associations will accept the majority opinion. The public should be informed by sending notices to Community Associations, setting up a Web site, advertising in Living in the City. A timeline was set to host a public meeting in September. This will provide 6 months time to get everyone on the same page.

Minutes prepared by Bonnie Bergsma Ecologist Planner March 17 2009