

Waldemar Parks Committee Report to Council April 18th, 2018



1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Waldemar is the largest urban area located within the Township of Amaranth (Township), County of Dufferin (County). There are currently approximately XXX homes within Waldemar and two draft plan subdivisions which will increase the population of Waldemar significantly. There is currently a single park located on the eastern banks of the Grand River which is comprised of a playground structure, a baseball diamond and a significant amount of open area.

1.2 Waldemar Parks Committee

In response to a request from Waldemar residents, the Council of the Township approved the formation of the Waldemar Parks Committee (Committee) in 2016 to provide input to the Township on the facilities, upgrades and maintenance in the Park in order to increase use of, and access to, the Park.

The Waldemar Parks Committee met a number of times in 2017 to review the existing property and facilities, brainstorm ideas for future work and maintenance and develop recommendations to present to Township Council.

The Committee is comprised of the following individuals;

- Kerry Gillard (Resident)
- Amanda Rayburn (Resident)
- Robin House (Resident)
- Chris Gerrits (Council Representative)
- Madelyn Gerrits (Youth Representative)
- Josephine Gerrits (Youth Representative)
- Atlanta Gillard (Youth Representative)
- Sarah Graham (Resident)
- Ken Shelton (Resident)
- Dwayne Wheeler (Resident)
- Kim Jensen (Resident)

Members were selected based on a call for volunteers and were appointed by Council to a four year term.

1.3 Existing Park and Recreation Overview

The Township has a number of parks spread out across urban areas (Laurel, Waldemar) and pockets of development (Devonleigh Subdivision, Amaranth Country Estates). There currently is no over arching plan for parks and recreation facilities in the Township.

There are also two proposed subdivisions within Waldemar, each of which would have their own designated park land.

Existing facilities and parks within the Township include;

Waldemar Park – play structure, baseball diamond, large amount of open space

Laurel – large open space, multiple baseball fields and soccer fields, play structure

Devonleigh Subdivision – small parkette with play structure, no fields

Amaranth Country Estates – small parkette with play structure, no fields (Township has not yet assumed ownership of this development and parkette)

Historically, the Township had a long running house league baseball program which has not operated in a number of years. The Township currently has a healthy recreational soccer program operated in Laurel by volunteers.

The goal of this committee and report is not to provide input of strategic planning for all the Township parks and recreation facilities and programs, but to provide input and points of discussion to the Township for the Waldemar Park as seen through the lens of Township residents and users of the existing Park.

The Committee recognizes the need for a long-term strategy for parks and recreation facilities within Waldemar to address future sports field and outdoor play structure needs.

The boundaries of the existing park are shown in Figure 1:



Figure 1: Waldemar Park Boundaries and Features

The purpose of the Committee is to provide feedback and recommendations to council on the existing park facilities and recreational programs offered within Waldemar and recommendations on short and long-term plans or goals for the park.

2.3 Work Completed in 2017

The Committee met a number of times in 2017 to educate themselves on the existing facilities and programs at the park, familiarize themselves with the park boundaries and brainstorm future goals, plans and programs.

In early 2017 the Committee completed some yard rolling at the soccer area and baseball diamond to level the area to make it safer for users.

Through a partnership with Grand Valley Minor Baseball, the ball diamond was utilized on a regular basis for practices and games. In the fall of 2017 the committee organized some maintenance of the ball diamond by residents (adding some gravel to the area and levelling. This partnership with Grand Valley Minor Baseball will continue and potentially expand through the summer of 2018.

In late 2017 an entry location for prohibited users (motorized vehicles) was identified along station street. The Township was notified and signage and barricades were added to this location.

2.4 Recommendations

Through a number of brainstorming session, the Committee developed a number of suggestions which have been classified as Short Term (1-2 year timeline) and Long Term (> 2 year timeline). These suggestions will be outlined briefly in the following sections.

2.4 Short Term (1- 2 year timeline)

The Committee identified a number of improvements and suggestions that can be completed in the short term. These include;

- Improve drainage along the walking trail. There is an existing ad hoc trail network in the open area of the park which has at least one area that gets significantly wet during the spring. This poses a health and safety hazard (trip hazard) and should be addressed immediately (see Photos 1 & 2). We feel that the issue could easily be remedied with the installation of a culvert that would allow water to flow along a natural flow path instead of being impeded by the trail. Council could also consider the installation of a short (<20ft long) elevated board walk through this area.



Photo 1: Wet Areas Along Trail



Photo 2: Skid Used to Cross Wet Area

- Replace mulch around playground equipment. The mulch appears to have degraded to approximately 65% of maximum height and is degrading (rotting) (see Photo 3). The mulch should be removed and replaced.



Photo 3: Decomposing Mulch Around Play Structure

- Open up the driveway (widen) and thin trees to improve sight lines. The Committee has checked with the GRCA and has received confirmation that the Township is free to cut/trim/remove trees as they see fit (See Photo 4). This work could be completed by residents and the trees could potentially be used for mulch around the play structure. The Committee has secured the use of a wood chipper for this work.



Photo 4: Area Along West of Driveway to be Cleared

- Trim/clear an existing trail within the wooded area and develop a trail system within the Park. (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Existing (Green) and Proposed (Orange) Trails

- Additional signage should include, notification that there are soccer nets and a ball diamond at the back of the park, poop and scoop bylaw signs, "Community Board" similar to the one at the Trailway Entrance.
- Improvement to the area to enhance the opportunity for for winter activities such as cross country skiing, snow shoeing and potentially an area for ice hockey
- A porta potty for park users
- At the baseball diamond, additional screenings for the ball diamond, bleachers and benches, garbage can, equipment box.
- Events to get people to the park so they know what is there. These could include a "Pumpkin Parade", Spring Clean up Day, Spring and Fall Community BBQ's, Community Sports Day etc.
- Users of the park report that dog owners typically have their dogs "off leash". The Committee heard at least one example of someone not willing to come to the park because of off leash dogs. This is not an acceptable use of the park and therefore the Committee feels that the park and users would benefit from the creation of a fenced in leash free dog area so that off leash dogs can be contained within a secure area.

2.4 Long Term (> 2 year timeline)

The Committee identified a number of improvements and suggestions that could be identified and planned for in the long term. These suggestions include;

- The installation of a covered pavilion which could be used for a skating pad in the winter and for community events in the Spring/Summer/Fall.
- Improvement of the parking area which would include expansion of the parking area to the north by removing trees and filling a small area.
- Upgrade the backstop and fencing around the ball diamond.
- Additional facilities such as a baseball net and a beach volleyball court.
- Surrounding the play structure with rubberized material.

3. Budgetary Implications and Timelines

3.1 Overview

Each of the recommendations outlined in the previous section are outlined below with estimates of the budgetary requirements for each item.

Table 1: Short Term

Item	Description	Budget	Timeline	Notes
1.	Improved drainage along trailway	\$0 - \$500.00	Spring/Summer 2018	Improved drainage (i.e. culvert) to be completed by volunteers. Potential costs to include rental of equipment or purchase of culvert materials.
2.	Replace mulch	\$0.00	Spring 2018	Replacement of the mulch has not been given a budget amount. The Committee is of the understanding that the Township will complete this as part of routine maintenance and has been budgeted for elsewhere.
3.	Open up driveway area and trees to improve sight lines from road.	\$0.00	Spring 2018	Work to be completed by volunteers
4.	Trim/clear existing trail through wooded area	\$0.00	Spring 2018	Work to be completed by volunteers
5.	Additional Signage & Community Board	\$2,500.00	Spring 2018	
6.	Improvements to allow for winter activities	\$0.00	Fall 2018	Work to be completed by volunteers
7.	Porta Potty	\$1,000.00	Spring 2018	Based on May through September rental

8.	Ball diamond upgrades	\$0.00 – Screenings \$2,000.00 – Bleachers \$1,000.00 – Benches \$1,500.00 – Garbage Can \$750.00 – Equipment Box	Spring 2018 Spring 2019 Spring 2018 Spring 2018 Spring 2018	No budget for screenings. Anticipated that Township already budgeted for this item. Equipment Box to be partially or completely funded by Grand Valley Minor Baseball in lieu of payment for baseball diamond use.
9.	Events to increase public awareness	\$300.00	Fall 2018/Ongoing	Budget is for printing of flyers for information purposes.
10.	Dog Park	\$7,000.00	2019	Budget includes supply and installation of appropriate fencing.

Table 2: Long Term

Item	Description	Budget	Timeline	Notes
1.	Covered multi use pavilion	\$50,000.00	2020 - 2022	More details to follow.
2.	Expansion of parking area	\$5,000.00	2020	Work to include removal of trees, importation of clean fill and covering with gravel
3.	Improvements to baseball diamond	\$5,000.00	2022	Work to include replacement of baseball fencing and backstop.
4.	Basketball and Volleyball Courts	\$5,000.00	2021	More details to follow
5.	Rubberized matting around play structure	\$5,000.00?		

3.2 Budget and Timeline Details

As you can see from the previous section, the Committee wishes to complete a number of small items in the short term completed primarily through volunteer forces and donations of time/materials and equipment. One example of this is the equipment box which will be completely or partially funded by Grand Valley Minor Baseball for the use of the baseball diamond in 2017/2018.

3.3 Covered Pavilion

The Committee feels that a covered pavilion would be the jewel of the park and could serve as a meeting place for the community and a hub for local activities. Recognizing that the costs of such a facility could be significant, the Committee is recommending a phased in approach to the construction. This would include;

2020 – planning and permitting to happen early in 2020. Stripping and grading for concrete pad to be completed in summer 2020 and cement pad installed summer/fall 2020. The concrete pad would be oversized (i.e. larger than the proposed pavilion) so that once complete there would be both covered and uncovered concrete space which will increase the potential uses. During this phase of the construction the Committee is recommending the installation of a basketball net.

2021 – installation of the pavilion structure. The framing of the pavilion will be completed in the summer/fall of 2021

2022 – completion of pavilion structure (roof) along with lighting/electrical.

This schedule would obviously be subject to change and it based upon Council approval and funding availability.

4. Funding/Fundraising

4.1 Overview

The committee plans on completing as much fundraising as possible to offset the costs associated with some of the major expenditures.

4.2 Funding Opportunities

The committee will be proactive in pursuing funding opportunities, including the following grants;

- Ontario Sports & Recreation Communities Fund
- Canada Post Community Foundation
- Air Canada Community Relations and Partnerships
- Ontario Trillium Foundation Seed, Grow, Capital and Transform Grants

Any other grants that the Committee becomes aware of will be investigated and applied for if applicable.

4.3 Fundraising

The Committee hopes to engage the community through community events which can be used as fundraising opportunities to raise capital money to complete some of the proposed projects.

The Committee is planning to run a number of community events in 2018 such as a Spring Clean Up, a Baseball Tournament and a Pumpkin Walk Halloween Event. Of these events, the Baseball Tournament would be a main source of fundraising.

Baseball Tournament - The Baseball Tournament will help raise awareness to the park facilities and increase community engagement. It is proposed that the first year of the tournament be open as an individual sign up tournament open to all ages and all residents of the Township. The event organizers would then divide the participants randomly into a number of teams which would play throughout the day. This will serve as fun community event and as well as a mixer allowing people to hopefully meet and interact with other residents. During the event BBQ food will be served along with drinks to raise money for park improvements.

Running Event – From 2011 through 2017 there was a running event in Grand Valley called Chase the Tornado. Due to a lack of volunteers it is the understanding of the Committee that the race has been discontinued. The Committee sees this as an opportunity to run a similar race originating in the park and following a similar course to what was run in Grand Valley. The Committee will be discussing specifics of this with the run organizers to see if the event was fiscally successful and is feasible for the Waldemar Park. This race would also help engage the community in physical activity and familiarize everyone with the trails located within the park.

4.4 Township Funding

As mentioned previously, the Committee plans to actively fundraise and explore funding opportunities for improvements to the Park. That being said, we feel that it would be prudent for the Committee to ask the Township to budget an annual amount to go into a reserve fund for the Waldemar Park.

Given that the Committee is asking for \$16,050 to cover improvements for the 2018 and 2019 years, the Committee would ask that the Township budget \$8,000.00 for the Waldemar Park upgrades in 2018 and an additional \$8,000.00 for the Waldemar Park upgrades in 2019. Any funds raised during the 2018 year would be taken off the amount requested in 2019 for improvements.

Additionally, the Committee is requesting that the Township earmark an additional \$4,000.00 per year for 2018 and 2019 to go into a Waldemar Park Reserve Fund to be used for future upgrades and capital expenditures.

Given that the total requested amount for 2018 (\$12,000) is less than one quarter of a percent (0.21%) of the total 2017 Budget for the Township the Committee feels as though this is money well spent in investing in this infrastructure.

An investment of \$4,000.00 into the reserve fund for 2018 and 2019 would give the Township a total of \$8,000.00 in 2020 in order to initiate the design and construction of the pavilion in 2020. Coupled with an additional \$12,000.00 in 2020 there would be a total of \$20,000.00 to initiate the design and install the concrete pad.

At this point the remainder of the pavilion would be completed once funding has been completely secured. We would propose that if Council were to continue to fund the project at a level of \$12,000 per year for 2021 and 2022, the Committee would then be responsible for approximately \$26,000.00 in funding/fundraising.

5. Future Expansion

5.1 Future Expansion Overview

There are currently two proposed developments within Waldemar, each with designated park lands. In the opinion of the Committee it doesn't make sense to include three disjointed park areas within Waldemar, each needing to be serviced and maintained.

The Committee feels that Waldemar could be serviced with one additional large park that would include space for a soccer field and a play structure. The second proposed park could be downsized significantly to a parkette with a play structure which would be easier to maintain than large open space and would be easily accessible for young children and parents in the nearby homes.

Resources could then be allocated to the improvements at the existing Waldemar Park to make it a hub within the community.