

#1 of a Series Public Meetings  
“Strategic Planning Process” Workshop  
SUMMARY

On Saturday morning, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Mr. Clem Pelot, an experienced parks and recreational planning specialist, described to about 23 attendees in the Westmeath Recreation Centre Hall what strategic planning was, and how it might help our community develop a long term plan for delivering and enjoying recreational services.

Mr. Pelot said that most public/non-profit organizations use a strategic planning process, in order to obtain the tools to build a big-picture, but simple and manageable plan. The aim of course is to be in a better position to provide what residents want now (and into the future), more efficiently and effectively.

The process consists of three elements:

1. We need to document where we are (agree on WDRA mission and mandates, identify facilities’ condition and usage, weaknesses and strengths) ,
2. We need to identify where we want to go (identify priority issues, agree to a common vision, develop goals and objectives), and
3. Finally we need to agree on how we get there (formulate strategies, develop doable actions, reporting).

From his experience, and by way of input from the attendees, Mr. Pelot felt strongly that the community was ready and able to move forward, ensuring adequate participation of all stakeholders; that is anyone who participates in WDRA sponsored activities, whether they be volunteers, users, suppliers, Ad Hoc committee, WDRA Board members, etc.

For the second part of the meeting, a break-out group session was held to provide attendees the opportunity to comment on existing WDRA Mission and mandates, as well as identify key issues through a SWOC analysis: that is identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges of the WDRA.

Note for clarity: The WDRA, in this context, refers to the whole membership of the association (residents) and not just the Board and its executive members.

Existing WDRA Mission Statement:    *“ We are a non-profit community governed organization, whose purpose is to support the people of our community in meeting their recreational, athletic, and social needs; to achieve the best possible community spirit and wellbeing”*

Comments/Suggestions on enhancing the Mission Statement:

- Some discussion about the use of the word “community”. Some say it’s great as is, so as not to restrict participation (many users do come from outside Westmeath, La Passe,

Perretton), while others suggest maybe some boundaries or locations be included to define the service area in the Mission Statement.

- Perhaps include the word “health”, instead of, or as well as, “spirit” or “wellbeing”.
- Suggestion that we include “and provide opportunities to”, after the word “support”.
- Perhaps include “cultural needs” as well.
- Will this Mission Statement stand up for the next 10 years?

#### Existing WDRA Mandates:

1. *To manage the maintenance and safe operation of the Westmeath Recreational Centre facility.*
2. *To rent the WRC facilities, indoor and outdoor, to a range of user groups or individuals throughout the year.*
3. *To present and operate a range of outdoor and indoor events throughout the year – sports, recreation, community building, hobby and leisure events – as part of the delivery of recreational services in the Township of Whitewater Region.*
4. *To recruit and train volunteers.*
5. *To promote and publicize the events, the work of the association and the lifestyle of the community at large.*
6. *To best support the spirit of community building and serve as a gathering centre and hub for all participants.*

#### Comments/Suggestions on enhancing the Mandates:

- Add “Fundraising” as a 7<sup>th</sup> Mandate.
- #2: Include “or make available” after “To rent”. Include wordage “to optimize usage and rentals”
- #3: collaborate with other R.A.’s in Whitewater Region. Services must be inclusive of all ages and demographics.
- #4: Include “provide mentoring and tools to promote successful succession planning.”

#### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges (SWOC) Analysis:

##### Comments re WDRA Strengths:

- Strong history/legacy of volunteering and participating. Tradition and pride of place.
- Good community support – most residents want it to work
- Strong local work ethic and family values
- Commitment to maintain facilities. Facilities are debt free.
- Well organized and appreciated community events
- Good newsletter and website for communications
- New residents providing new ideas, existing residents providing experience

Comments re WDRA Weaknesses:

- We don't have a good handle on demographics and it's changes
- Aging facility and high maintenance costs. Inadequate investment practice.
- Fractions between user groups
- Limited municipal funding
- Volunteer group is shallow and may be getting tired
- Some people resist change or tend to see change as a negative.
- Better communications always needed. Miscommunication brings misunderstandings and resentment.
- Limited co-ordination with wider region RA's
- Some residents just don't want to be involved
- Limited local economic development
- Lack of willingness to pay for services
- Inability to optimize the facilities
- Resentment in rental to outsiders

Comments re WDRA Opportunities:

- Increased rentals and revenues
- Create new programs
- Other uses of the arena floor off season (i.e. ball hockey, badminton, lacrosse)
- Other usages of hall: speaker series, theatre, arts and culture events, meetings, school boards
- Networking with other arenas to find win-win scenarios (reduce costs, increase revenues)
- Higher fuel costs mean more people looking for recreation closer to home
- Link to health centre for leadership opportunities.

Comments re WDRA Challenges:

- To increase volunteer base or hire staff
- Programming to serve 25 to 50 age group
- Satisfy recreational needs of all ages and desires – new programs
- Getting better handle on demographics and needs.
- To reduce high Operating costs
- Optimizing facility rentals
- Be inclusive to all. And make more accessible physically (i.e. Elevator)
- Overcome sense of entitlement by some residents.
- The capital cost for renewal of equipment and infrastructure

- END -